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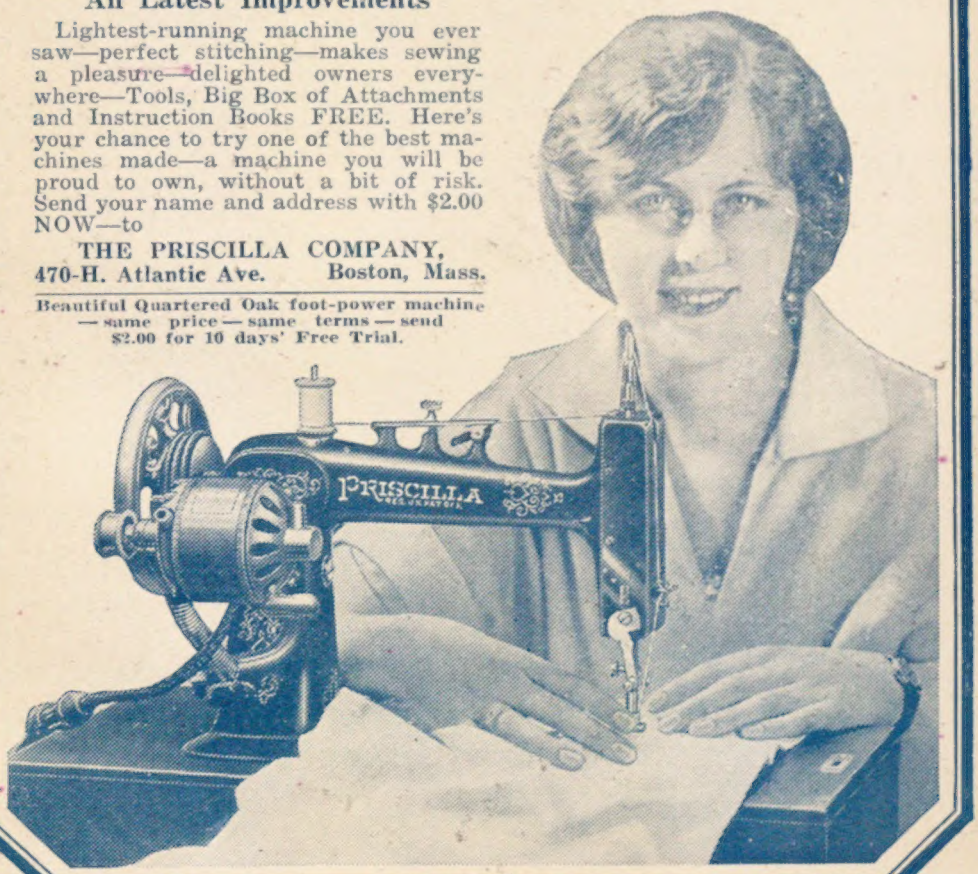

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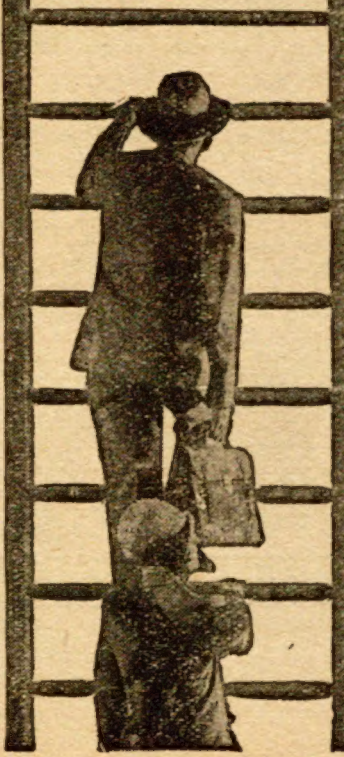

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Again in This Issue

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¶ Realizing that one of the problems of the home is the matter of money, we offer our readers a service, MONEY MAKING OPPORTUNITIES.

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NOT long ago an innocent citizen—a fine fellow in every way—joined a secret order—the real name of which is not disclosed. During the initiation ceremonies he was brutally killed. No trace of his murderer could be found, nor any evidence as to how the deed was done—until the authorities finally appealed for help to De Witt Wickford. Read about this extraordinary case in the February MYSTERY STORIES—THE INITIATION DEATH, by R. D. Kingslyn. It's a fascinating, gripping yarn, and its revelations are likely to make all members of the great fraternal orders, such as the Masons, Knights of Columbus, Elks, Loyal Order of Moose, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, etc., sit up and take notice. Could such a crime be committed in their lodge-rooms? Another great tale by R. D. Kingslyn soon.

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THE BANDIT RENDEZVOUS, a new SPY MASTER story, by Richard Wilmer Rowan. The sinister Von Karl shows his enemies—and his friends—one or two new tricks. And they show him one or two.

MISS JUDAS, by John Baer, is a crime story characterized by rare humor. The very nature of our fiction tends to make it serious in tone, but in each issue we shall print a funny yarn, for the sake of variety.

TREATY MONEY, by Leslie McFarlane, is a virile, exciting tale of the wild Northwest and its world-famed Mounted Police. A scene from this story, painted by Fred Craft, will be pictured on the February cover.

JUST MARCHING ON, by Owen Atkinson, is a weird story of war-time buddies who found new fields to tramp.

THE SEVENTH STRIPE, by Jean Gillespie, tells of the final adventure of Kitchie, the Bad One, who is deposited on a priceless Tien-Tsin rug by "a whining and sniffling bundle of rags."

THE BLUE VASE, by Paul Ernst, is the story of an artist who fell in love with a ghost-girl. There's an exquisite touch to this story that will appeal to you.

THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK, the most pathetic and tragic figure of history, is the subject treated in this month's FAMOUS UNSOLVED MYSTERIES. This remarkable series of fact stories, by Alvin F. Harlow, is proving immensely popular.

THE MYSTERY CLUB has a goodly membership, but we'd like more—many more. It's an interesting test of your ingenuity—solving those crime problems by Everard Jason. He won't like our saying it, but we think that one or two of the solutions sent in by readers of the November issue were better than his own. We foresee the development of some great writers of mystery fiction as a result of this department. And the prizes are worth winning.

We have received some very good letters for our department, THE MOST MYSTERIOUS HAPPENING OF MY LIFE, but we want more and better ones. Many of you have had mysterious happenings, and we want you to tell us about them. Remember, you will be paid for those that we print, and we shall not use your name if you don't wish us to. There'll be no publicity, if you object to it.

THE EDITOR.

"Here is the man and here is the evidence against him."

This King Business

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By DASHIELL HAMMETT

The desire to rule is inherent in the breasts of most of us, notwithstanding the number of thrones that have toppled in the past decade. Mr. Hammett tells us of the strange series of events which led an American youth to seek kingship in "the Powder Magazine of Europe"—the Balkans. The consequences were—to put it mildly—exciting.

CHAPTER I

"YES"—AND "NO"

THE train from Belgrade set me down in Stefania, capital of Muravia, in early afternoon — a rotten afternoon. Cold wind blew cold rain in my face and down my neck as I left the square granite barn of a railroad station to climb into a taxicab.

English meant nothing to the chauffeur, nor French. Good German might have failed. Mine wasn't good. It was a hodgepodge of

grunts and gargles. This chauffeur was the first person who had ever pretended to understand it. I suspected him of guessing, and I expected to be taken to some distant suburban point. Maybe he was a good guesser. Anyhow, he took me to the Hotel of the Republic.

The hotel was a new six-story affair, very proud of its elevators, American plumbing, private baths, and other modern tricks. After I had washed and changed clothes I went down to the café for luncheon. Then, supplied with minute instructions in English, French, and sign-language by a highly uniformed head porter, I turned up my raincoat collar and crossed the muddy plaza to call on Roy Scanlan, United States *chargé d'affaires* in this youngest and smallest of the Balkan States.

HE was a pudgy man of thirty, with smooth hair already far along the gray route, a nervous, flabby face, plump white hands that twitched, and very nice clothes. He shook hands with me, patted me into a chair, barely glanced at my letter of introduction, and stared at my necktie while saying:

"So you're a private detective from San Francisco?"

"Yes."

"And?"

"Lionel Grantham."

"Surely not!"

"Yes."

"But he's—" The diplomat realized he was looking into my eyes, hurriedly switched his gaze to my hair, and forgot what he had started to say.

"But he's what?" I prodded him.

"Oh!"—with a vague upward motion of head and eyebrows—"not that sort."

"How long has he been here?" I asked.

"Two months. Possibly three or three and a half or more."

"You know him well?"

"Oh, no! By sight, of course, and to talk to. He and I are the only Americans here, so we're fairly well acquainted."

"Know what he's doing here?"

"No, I don't. He just happened to stop here in his travels, I imagine, unless, of course, he's here for some special reason. No doubt there's a girl in it—she is General Radnjak's daughter—though I don't think so."

"How does he spend his time?"

"I really haven't any idea. He lives at the Hotel of the Republic, is quite a favorite among our foreign colony, rides a bit, lives the usual life of a young man of family and wealth."

"Mixed up with anybody who isn't all he ought to be?"

"Not that I know of, except that I've seen him with Mahmoud and Einarson. They are certainly scoundrels, though they may not be."

"Who are they?"

"Nubar Mahmoud is private secretary to Doctor Semich, the President. Colonel Einarson is an Icelander, just now virtually the head of the army. I know nothing about either of them."

"Except that they are scoundrels?"

The *chargé d'affaires* wrinkled his round white forehead in pain and gave me a reproachful glance.

"Not at all," he said. "Now, may I ask, of what is Grantham suspected?"

"Nothing."

"Then?"

"Seven months ago, on his twenty-first birthday, this Lionel Gran-

tham got hold of the money his father had left him—a nice wad. Till then the boy had had a tough time of it. His mother had, and has, highly developed middle-class notions of refinement. His father had been a genuine aristocrat in the old manner—a hard-souled, soft-spoken individual who got what he wanted by simply taking it; with a liking for old wine and young women, and plenty of both, and for cards and dice and running horses—and fights, whether he was in them or watching them.

"While he lived the boy had a he-raising. Mrs. Grantham thought her husband's tastes low, but he was a man who had things his own way. Besides, the Grantham blood was the best in America. She was a woman to be impressed by that. Eleven years ago—when Lionel was a kid of ten—the old man died. Mrs. Grantham swapped the family roulette wheel for a box of dominoes and began to convert the kid into a patent leather Galahad.

"I've never seen him, but I'm told the job wasn't a success. However, she kept him bundled up for eleven years, not even letting him escape to college. So it went until the day when he was legally of age and in possession of his share of his father's estate. That morning he kisses Mamma and tells her casually that he's off for a little run around the world—alone. Mamma does and says all that might be expected of her, but it's no good. The Grantham blood is up. Lionel promises to drop her a post-card now and then, and departs.

"He seems to have behaved fairly well during his wandering. I suppose just being free gave him all the excitement he needed. But a few weeks ago the trust company that handles his affairs got instructions from him to turn some railroad bonds into cash and ship the money to him in care of a Belgrade bank. The amount was large—over the three million mark—so the trust company told Mrs. Grantham about it. She chucked a fit. She had been getting letters from him—from Paris, without a word said about Belgrade.

"Mamma was all for dashing over to Europe at once. Her brother, Senator Walbourn, talked her out of it. He did some cabling, and learned that Lionel was neither in Paris nor in Belgrade, unless he was hiding. Mrs. Grantham packed her trunks and made reservations. The Senator headed her off again, convincing her that the lad would resent her interference, telling her the best thing was to investigate on the quiet. He brought the job to the Agency. I went to Paris, learned that a friend of Lionel's there was relaying his mail, and that Lionel was here in Stefania. On the way down I stopped off in Belgrade and learned that the money was being sent here to him—most of it already has been. So here I am."

SCANLAN smiled happily.

"There's nothing I can do," he said. "Grantham is of age, and it's his money."

"Right," I agreed, "and I'm in the same fix. All I can do is poke around, find out what he's up to, try to save his dough if he's being gypped. Can't you give me even a guess at the answer? Three million dollars—what could he put it into?"

"I don't know." The *chargé d'affaires* fidgeted uncomfortably. "There's no business here that amounts to anything. It's purely an agricultural country, split up among small land-owners—ten, fifteen, twenty acre farms. There's his as-

sociation with Einarson and Mahmoud, though. They'd certainly rob him if they got the chance. I'm positive they're robbing him. But I don't think they would. Perhaps he isn't acquainted with them. It's probably a woman."

"Well, whom should I see? I'm handicapped by not knowing the country, not knowing the language. To whom can I take my story and get help?"

"I don't know," he said gloomily. Then his face brightened. "Go to Vasilije Djudakovich. He is Minister of Police. He is the man for you! He can help you, and you may trust him. He has a digestion instead of a brain. He'll not understand a thing you tell him. Yes, Djudakovich is your man!"

"Thanks," I said, and staggered out into the muddy street.

CHAPTER II

ROMAINE

I FOUND the Minister of Police's offices in the Administration Building, a gloomy concrete pile next to the Executive Residence at the head of the plaza. In French that was even worse than my German, a thin, white-whiskered clerk, who looked like a consumptive Santa Claus, told me His Excellency was not in. Looking solemn, lowering my voice to a whisper, I repeated that I had come from the United States *chargé d'affaires*. This hocuspocus seemed to impress Saint Nicholas. He nodded understandingly and shuffled out of the room. Presently he was back, bowing at the door, asking me to follow him.

I tailed him along a dim corridor to a wide door marked "15." He opened it, bowed me through it, wheezed, "*Asseyez-vous, s'il vous plaît,*" closed the door and left me. I was in an office, a large, square one. Everything in it was large. The four windows were double-size. The chairs were young benches, except the leather one at the desk, which could have been the rear half of a touring car. A couple of men could have slept on the desk. Twenty could have eaten at the table.

A door opposite the one through which I had come opened, and a girl came in, closing the door behind her, shutting out a throbbing purr, as of some heavy machine, that had sounded through.

"I'm Romaine Frankl," she said in English, "His Excellency's secretary. Will you tell me what you wish?"

She might have been any age from twenty to thirty, something less than five feet in height, slim without boniness, with curly hair as near black as brown can get, black-lashed eyes whose gray irises had black rims, a small, delicate-featured face, and a voice that seemed too soft and faint to carry as well as it did. She wore a red woolen dress that had no shape except that which her body gave it, and when she moved—to walk or raise a hand—it was as if it cost her no energy—as if some one else were moving her.

"I'd like to see him," I said while I was accumulating this data.

"Later, certainly," she promised, "but it's impossible now." She turned, with her peculiar effortless grace, back to the door, opening it so that the throbbing purr sounded in the room again. "Hear?" she said. "He's taking his nap."

SHE shut the door against His Excellency's snoring and floated across the room to climb up in the immense leather chair at the desk.

"Do sit down," she said, wriggling a tiny forefinger at a chair beside

the desk. "It will save time if you will tell me your business, because, unless you speak our tongue, I'll have to interpret your message to His Excellency."

I told her about Lionel Grantham and my interest in him, in practically the same words I had used on Scanlan, winding up:

"You see, there's nothing I can do except try to learn what the boy's up to and give him a hand if he needs it. I can't go to him—he's too much Grantham, I'm afraid, to take kindly to what he'd think was nursemaid stuff. Mr. Scanlan advised me to come to the Minister of Police."

"You were fortunate." She looked as if she wanted to make a joke about my country's representative but weren't sure how I'd take it. "Your *chargé d'affaires* is not always easy to understand."

"Once you get the hang of it, it's not hard," I said. "You just throw out all his statements that have *no's* or *not's* or *nothing's* or *don't's* in them."

"That's it! That's it, exactly!" She leaned toward me, laughing. "I've always known there was some key to it, but nobody's been able to find it before. You've solved our national problem."

"For reward, then, I should be given all the information you have about Grantham."

"You should, but I'll have to speak to His Excellency first. He'll wake presently."

"You can tell me unofficially what you think of Grantham. You know him?"

"Yes. He's charming. A nice boy, delightfully naïf, inexperienced, but really charming."

"Who are his friends here?"

She shook her head and said:

"No more of that until His Excellency wakes. You're from San Francisco? I remember the funny little street cars, and the fog, and the salad right after the soup, and Coffee Dan's."

"You've been there?"

"Twice. I was in the United States for a year and half, in vaudeville, bringing rabbits out of hats."

WE were still talking about that half an hour later when the door opened and the Minister of Police came in.

The over-size furniture immediately shrank to normal, the girl became a midget, and I felt like somebody's little boy.

This Vasilije Djudakovich stood nearly seven feet tall, and that was nothing to his girth. Maybe he wouldn't weigh more than five hundred pounds, but, looking at him, it was hard to think except in terms of tons. He was a blond-haired, blond-bearded mountain of meat in a black frock coat. He wore a necktie, so I suppose he had a collar, but it was hidden all the way around by the red rolls of his neck. His white vest was the size and shape of a hoop-skirt, and in spite of that it strained at the buttons. His eyes were almost invisible between the cushions of flesh around them, and were shaded into a colorless darkness, like water in a deep well. His mouth was a fat red oval among the yellow hairs of his whiskers and mustache. He came into the room slowly, ponderously, and I was surprised that the floor didn't creak nor the room tremble.

Romaine Frankl was watching me attentively as she slid out of the big leather chair and introduced me to the Minister. He gave me a fat, sleepy smile and a hand that had the general appearance of a naked baby, and let himself down slowly

into the chair the girl had quit. Planted there, he lowered his head until it rested on the pillows of his several chins, and then he seemed to go to sleep.

I drew up another chair for the girl. She took another sharp look at me—she seemed to be hunting for something in my face—and began to talk to him in what I suppose was the native lingo. She talked rapidly for about twenty minutes, while he gave no sign that he was listening or that he was even awake.

When she was through, he said: "*Da.*" He spoke dreamily, but there was a volume to the syllable that could have come from no place smaller than his gigantic belly.

The girl turned to me, smiling.

"His Excellency will be glad to give you every possible assistance. Officially, of course, he does not care to interfere in the affairs of a visitor from another country, but he realizes the importance of keeping Mr. Grantham from being victimized while here. If you will return tomorrow afternoon, at, say, three o'clock . . ."

I promised to do that, thanked her, shook hands with the mountain again, and went out into the rain.

CHAPTER III

SHADOWING

BACK at the hotel, I had no trouble learning that Lionel Grantham occupied a suite on the sixth floor and was in it at that time. I had his photograph in my pocket and his description in my head. I spent what was left of the afternoon and the early evening waiting for a look at him. At a little after seven I got it.

He stepped out of the elevator, a tall, flat-backed boy with a supple body that tapered from broad shoulders to narrow hips, carried erectly on long, muscular legs—the sort of frame that tailors like. His pink, regular-featured, really handsome face wore an expression of aloof superiority that was too marked to be anything else than a cover for youthful self-consciousness.

Lighting a cigarette, he passed into the street. The rain had stopped, though clouds overhead promised more shortly. He turned down the street afoot. So did I.

We went to a much gilded restaurant two blocks from the hotel, where a gypsy orchestra played on a little balcony stuck insecurely high on one wall. All the waiters and half the diners seemed to know the boy. He bowed and smiled to this side and that as he walked down to a table near the far end, where two men were waiting for him.

One of them was tall and thick-bodied, with bushy dark hair and a flowing dark mustache. His florid, short-nosed face wore the expression of a man who doesn't mind a fight now and then. This one was dressed in a green and gold military uniform, with high boots of the shiniest black leather. His companion was in evening clothes, a plump, swarthy man of medium height, with oily black hair and a suave, oval face.

While young Grantham joined this pair I found a table some distance from them for myself. I ordered dinner and looked around at my neighbors. There was a sprinkling of uniforms in the room, some dress coats and evening gowns, but most of the diners were in ordinary daytime clothes. I saw a couple of faces that were probably British, a Greek or two, a few Turks. The food was good and so was my appetite. I was smoking a cigarette over a tiny cup of syrupy coffee

when Grantham and the big florid officer got up and went away.

I couldn't have got my bill and paid it in time to follow them, without raising a disturbance, so I let them go. Then I settled for my meal and waited until the dark, plump man they had left behind called for his check. I was in the street a minute or more ahead of him, standing, looking up toward the dimly electric-lighted plaza with what was meant for the expression of a tourist who didn't quite know where to go next.

He passed me, going up the muddy street with the soft, careful-where-you-put-your-foot tread of a cat.

A soldier—a bony man in sheepskin coat and cap, with a gray mustache bristling over gray, sneering lips—stepped out of a dark doorway and stopped the swarthy man with whining words.

The swarthy man lifted hands and shoulders in a gesture that held both anger and surprise.

The soldier whined again, but the sneer on his gray mouth became more pronounced. The plump man's voice was low, sharp, angry, but he moved a hand from pocket to soldier, and the brown of Muravian paper money showed in the hand. The soldier pocketed the money, raised a hand in a salute, and went across the street.

WHEN the swarthy man had stopped staring after the soldier, I moved toward the corner around which sheepskin coat and cap had vanished. My soldier was a block and a half down the street, striding along with bowed head. He was in a hurry. I got plenty of exercise keeping up with him. Presently the city began to thin out. The thinner it got, the less I liked this expedition. Shadowing is at its best in daytime, downtown in a familiar large city. This was shadowing at its worst.

He led me out of the city along a cement road bordered by few houses. I stayed as far back as I could, so he was a faint, blurred shadow ahead. He turned a sharp bend in the road. I hustled toward the bend, intending to drop back again as soon as I had rounded it. Speeding, I nearly gummed the works.

The soldier suddenly appeared around the curve, coming toward me.

A little behind me, a small pile of lumber on the roadside was the only cover within a hundred feet. I stretched my short legs thither.

Irregularly piled boards made a shallow cavity in one end of the pile, almost large enough to hold me. On my knees in the mud, I huddled into that cavity.

The soldier came into sight through a chink between boards. Bright metal gleamed in one of his hands. A knife, I thought. But when he halted in front of my shelter I saw it was a revolver of the old-style nickel-plated sort.

He stood still, looking at my shelter, looking up the road and down the road. He grunted, came toward me. Slivers stung my cheek as I rubbed myself flatter against the timber-ends. My gun was with my blackjack—in my gladstone bag, in my room in my hotel. A fine place to have them now! The soldier's gun was bright in his hand.

Rain began to patter on boards and ground. The soldier turned up the collar of his coat as he came. Nobody ever did anything I liked more. A man stalking another wouldn't have done that. He didn't know I was there. He was hunting a hiding place for himself. The

game was even. If he found me, he had the gun, but I had seen him first.

His sheepskin coat rasped against the wood as he went by me, bending low as he passed my corner for the back of the pile, so close to me that the same raindrops seemed to be hitting both of us. I undid my fists after that. I couldn't see him, but I could hear him breathing, scratching himself, even humming.

A couple of weeks went by.

The mud I was kneeling in soaked through my pants-legs, wetting my knees and shins. The rough wood filed skin off my face every time I breathed. My mouth was as dry as my knees were wet, because I was breathing through it for silence.

An automobile came around the bend, headed for the city. I heard the soldier grunt softly, heard the click of his gun as he cocked it. The car came abreast, went on. The soldier blew out his breath and started scratching himself and humming again.

Another couple of weeks passed.

Men's voices came through the rain, barely audible, louder, quite clear. Four soldiers in sheepskin coats and hats walked down the road the way we had come, their voices presently shrinking into silence as they disappeared around the curve.

IN the distance an automobile horn barked two ugly notes. The soldier grunted—a grunt that said clearly: "Here it is." His feet slopped in the mud, and the lumber pile creaked under his weight. I couldn't see what he was up to.

White light danced around the bend in the road, and an automobile came into view—a high-powered car going cityward with a speed that paid no attention to the wet slipperiness of the road. Rain and night and speed blurred its two occupants, who were in the front seat.

Over my head a heavy revolver roared. The soldier was working. The speeding car swayed crazily along the wet cement, its brakes screaming.

When the sixth shot told me the nickel-plated gun was probably empty, I jumped out of my hollow.

The soldier was leaning over the lumber pile, his gun still pointing at the skidding car while he peered through the rain.

He turned as I saw him, swung the gun around to me, snarled an order I couldn't understand. I was betting the gun was empty. I raised both hands high over my head, made an astonished face, and kicked him in the belly.

He folded over on me, wrapping himself around my leg. We both went down. I was underneath, but his head was against my thigh. His cap fell off. I caught his hair with both hands and yanked myself into a sitting position. His teeth went into my leg. I called him disagreeable things and put my thumbs in the hollows under his ears. It didn't take much pressure to teach him that he oughtn't to bite people. When he lifted his face to howl, I put my right fist in it, pulling him into the punch with my left hand in his hair. It was a nice solid sock.

I pushed him off my leg, got up, took a handful of his coat collar, and dragged him out into the road.

CHAPTER IV

INTRODUCTIONS

WHITE light poured over us. Squinting into it, I saw the automobile standing down the road, its spotlight turned on me and my

sparring partner. A big man in green and gold came into the light—the florid officer who had been one of Grantham's companions in the restaurant. An automatic was in one of his hands.

He strode over to us, stiff-legged in his high boots, ignored the soldier on the ground, and examined me carefully with sharp little dark eyes.

"British?" he asked.

"American."

He bit a corner of his mustache and said meaninglessly:

"Yes, that is better."

His English was guttural, with a German accent.

Lionel Grantham came from the car to us. His face wasn't as pink as it had been.

"What is it?" he asked the officer, but he looked at me.

"I don't know," I said. "I took a stroll after dinner and got mixed up on my directions. Finding myself out here, I decided I was headed the wrong way. When I turned around to go back I saw this fellow duck behind the lumber pile. He had a gun in his hand. I took him for a stick-up, so I played Indian on him. Just as I got to him he jumped up and began spraying you people. I reached him in time to spoil his aim. Friend of yours?"

"You're an American," the boy said. "I'm Lionel Grantham. This is Colonel Einarson. We're very grateful to you." He screwed up his forehead and looked at Einarson. "What do you think of it?"

The officer shrugged his shoulders, growled, "One of my children—we'll see," and kicked the ribs of the man on the ground.

The kick brought the soldier to life. He sat up, rolled over on hands and knees, and began a broken, long-winded entreaty, plucking at the Colonel's tunic with dirty hands.

"Ach!" Einarson knocked the hands down with a tap of pistol barrel across knuckles, looked with disgust at the muddy marks on his tunic, and growled an order.

The soldier jumped to his feet, stood at attention, got another order, did an about-face, and marched to the automobile. Colonel Einarson strode stiff-legged behind him, holding his automatic to the man's back. Grantham put a hand on my arm.

"Come along," he said. "We'll thank you properly and get better acquainted after we've taken care of this fellow."

COLONEL EINARSON got into the driver's seat, with the soldier beside him. Grantham waited while I found the soldier's revolver. Then we got into the rear seat. The officer looked doubtfully at me out of his eye-corners, but said nothing. He drove the car back the way it had come. He liked speed, and we hadn't far to go. By the time we were settled in our seats the car was whisking us through a gateway in a high stone wall, with a sentry on each side presenting arms. We did a sliding half-circle into a branching driveway and jerked to a stand-still in front of a square whitewashed building.

Einarson prodded the soldier out ahead of him. Grantham and I got out. To the left, a row of long, low buildings showed pale gray in the rain—barracks. The door of the square, white building was opened by a bearded orderly in green. We went in. Einarson pushed his prisoner across the small reception hall and through the open door of a bedroom. Grantham and I followed them in. The orderly stopped in the doorway, traded some words with

Einarson, and went away, closing the door.

The room we were in looked like a cell, except that there were no bars over the one small window. It was a narrow room, with bare, whitewashed walls and ceiling. The wooden floor, scrubbed with lye until it was almost as white as the walls, was bare. For furniture there was a black iron cot, three folding chairs of wood and canvas, and an unpainted chest of drawers, with comb, brush, and a few papers on top. That was all.

"Be seated, gentlemen," Einarson said, indicating the camp chairs. "We'll get at this thing now."

THE boy and I sat down. The officer laid his pistol on the top of the chest of drawers, rested one elbow beside the pistol, took a corner of his mustache in one big red hand, and addressed the soldier. His voice was kindly, paternal. The soldier, standing rigidly upright in the middle of the floor, replied, whining, his eyes focused on the officer's with a blank, in-turned look.

They talked for five minutes or more. Impatience grew in the Colonel's voice and manner. The soldier kept his blank abjectness. Einarson ground his teeth together and looked angrily at the boy and me.

"This pig!" he exclaimed, and began to bellow at the soldier.

Sweat sprang out on the soldier's gray face, and he cringed out of his military stiffness. Einarson stopped bellowing at him and yelled two words at the door. It opened and the bearded orderly came in with a short, thick, leather whip. At a nod from Einarson, he put the whip beside the automatic on the top of the chest of drawers and went out.

The soldier whimpered. Einarson spoke curtly to him. The soldier shuddered, began to unfasten his coat with shaking fingers, pleading all the while with whining, stuttering words. He took off his coat, his green blouse, his gray undershirt, letting them fall on the floor, and stood there, his hairy, not exactly clean body naked from the waist up. He worked his fingers together and cried.

Einarson grunted a word. The soldier stiffened at attention, hands at sides, facing us, his left side to Einarson.

Slowly Colonel Einarson removed his own belt, unbuttoned his tunic, took it off, folded it carefully, and laid it on the cot. Beneath it he wore a white cotton shirt. He rolled the sleeves up above his elbows and picked up the whip.

"This pig!" he said again.

Lionel Grantham stirred uneasily on his chair. His face was white, his eyes dark.

CHAPTER V

A FLOGGING

LEANING his left elbow on the chest of drawers again, playing with his mustache-end with his left hand, standing indolently cross-legged, Einarson began to flog the soldier. His right arm raised the whip, brought the lash whistling down to the soldier's back, raised it again, brought it down again. It was especially nasty because he was not hurrying himself, not exerting himself. He meant to flog the man until he got what he wanted, and he was saving his strength so that he could keep it up as long as necessary.

With the first blow the terror went out of the soldier's eyes. They dulled sullenly and his lips stopped twitching. He stood woodenly under the beating, staring over Grantham's

head. The officer's face had also become expressionless. Anger was gone. He showed no pleasure in his work, not even that of relieving his feelings. His air was the air of a stoker shoveling coal, of a carpenter sawing a board, of a stenographer typing a letter. Here was a job to be done in a workmanlike manner, without haste or excitement or wasted effort, without either enthusiasm or repulsion. It was nasty, but it taught me respect for this Colonel Einarson.

Lionel Grantham sat on the edge of his folding chair, staring at the soldier with white-ringed eyes. I offered the boy a cigarette, making an unnecessarily complicated operation out of lighting it and my own —to break up his score-keeping. He had been counting the strokes, and that wasn't good for him.

The whip curved up, swished down, cracked on the naked back—up, down, up, down. Einarson's florid face took on the damp glow of moderate exercise. The soldier's gray face was a lump of putty. He was facing Grantham and me. We couldn't see the marks of the whip.

Grantham said something to himself in a whisper. Then he gasped:

"I can't stand this!"

Einarson didn't look around from his work.

"Don't stop it now," I muttered. "We've gone this far."

The boy got up unsteadily and went to the window, opened it and stood looking out into the rainy night. Einarson paid no attention to him. He was putting more weight into the whipping now, standing with his feet far apart, leaning forward a little, his left hand on his hip, his right carrying the whip up and down with increasing swiftness.

The soldier swayed and a sob shook his hairy chest. The whip cut—cut—cut. I looked at my watch. Einarson had been at it for forty minutes, and looked good for the rest of the night.

The soldier moaned and turned toward the officer. Einarson did not break the rhythm of his stroke. The lash cut the man's shoulder. I caught a glimpse of his back—raw meat. Einarson spoke sharply. The soldier jerked himself to attention again, his left side to the officer. The whip went on with its work—up, down, up, down, up, down.

THE soldier flung himself on hands and knees at Einarson's feet and began to pour out sob-broken words. Einarson looked down at him, listening carefully, holding the lash of the whip in his left hand, the butt still in his right. When the man had finished, Einarson asked questions, got answers, nodded, and the soldier stood up. Einarson put a friendly hand on the man's shoulder, turned him around, looked at his mangled red back, and said something in a sympathetic tone. Then he called the orderly in and gave him some orders. The soldier, moaning as he bent, picked up his discarded clothes and followed the orderly out of the bedroom.

Einarson tossed the whip up on top of the chest of drawers and crossed to the bed to pick up his tunic. A leather pocketbook slid from an inside pocket to the floor. When he recovered it, a soiled newspaper clipping slipped out and floated across to my feet. I picked it up and gave it back to him—a photograph of a man, the Shah of Persia, according to the French caption under it.

"That pig!" he said—meaning the soldier, not the Shah—as he put on his tunic and buttoned it. "He has a son, also until last week of my troops. This son drinks too much

of wine. I reprimand him. He is insolent. What kind of army is it without discipline? Pigs! I knock this pig down, and he produces a knife. Ach! What kind of army is it where a soldier may attack his officers with knives? After I—personally, you comprehend—have finished with this swine, I have him court-martialed and sentenced to twenty years in the prison. This elder pig, his father, does not like that. So he will shoot me to-night. Ach! What kind of army is that?"

Lionel Grantham came away from his window. His young face was haggard. His young eyes were ashamed of the haggardness of his face.

COLONEL EINARSON made me a stiff bow and a formal speech of thanks for spoiling the soldier's aim — which I hadn't — and saving his life. Then the conversation turned to my presence in Muravia. I told them briefly that I had held a captain's commission in the military intelligence department during the war. That much was the truth, and that was all the truth I gave them. After the war — so my fairy tale went—I had decided to stay in Europe, had taken my discharge there and had drifted around, doing odd jobs at one place and another. I was vague, trying to give them the impression that those odd jobs had not always, or usually, been ladylike. I gave them more definite—though still highly imaginary—details of my recent employment with a French syndicate, admitting that I had come to this corner of the world because I thought it better not to be seen in Western Europe for a year or so.

"Nothing I could be jailed for," I said, "but things could be made uncomfortable for me. So I roamed over into *Mitteleuropa*, learned that I might find a connection in Belgrade, got there to find it a false alarm, and came on down here. I may pick up something here. I've got a date with the Minister of Police to-morrow. I think I can show him where he can use me."

"The gross Djudakovich!" Einarson said with frank contempt. "You find him to your liking?"

"No work, no eat," I said.

"Einarson," Grantham began quickly, hesitated, said: "Couldn't we—don't you think——" and didn't finish.

The Colonel frowned at him, saw I had noticed the frown, cleared his throat, and addressed me in a gruffly hearty tone:

"Perhaps it would be well if you did not too speedily engage yourself to this fat minister. It may be —there is a possibility that we know of another field where your talents might find employment more to your taste—and profit."

I let the matter stand there, saying neither yes nor no.

CHAPTER VI

CARDS ON THE TABLE

WE returned to the city in the officer's car. He and Grantham sat in the rear. I sat beside the soldier who drove. The boy and I got out at our hotel. Einarson said good night and was driven away as if he were in a hurry.

"It's early," Grantham said as we went indoors. "Come up to my room."

I stopped at my own room to wash off the mud I'd gathered around the lumber stack and to change my clothes, and then went up with him. He had three rooms on the top floor, overlooking the plaza.

He set out a bottle of whisky,

a syphon, lemons, cigars and cigarettes, and we drank, smoked, and talked. Fifteen or twenty minutes of the talk came from no deeper than the mouth on either side—comments on the night's excitement, our opinions of Stefania, and so on. Each of us had something to say to the other. Each was weighing the other in before he said it.

I decided to put mine over first.

"Colonel Einarson was spoofing us to-night," I said.

"Spoofing?" The boy sat up straight, blinking.

"His soldier shot for money, not revenge."

"You mean——?" His mouth stayed open.

"I mean the little dark man you ate with gave the soldier money."

"Mahmoud! Why, that's—— You are sure?"

"I saw it."

He looked at his feet, yanking his gaze away from mine as if he didn't want me to see that he thought I was lying.

"The soldier may have lied to Einarson," he said presently, still trying to keep me from knowing he thought me the liar. "I can understand some of the language, as spoken by the educated Muravians, but not the country dialect the soldier talked, so I don't know what he said, but he may have lied, you know."

"Not a chance," I said. "I'd bet my pants he told the truth."

He continued to stare at his outstretched feet, fighting to hold his face cool and calm. Part of what he was thinking slipped out in words:

"Of course, I owe you a tremendous debt for saving us from——"

"You don't. You owe that to the soldier's bad aim. I didn't jump him till his gun was empty."

"But——" His young eyes were wide before mine, and if I had pulled a machine gun out of my cuff he wouldn't have been surprised. He suspected me of everything on the blotter. I cursed myself for overplaying my hand. There was nothing to do now but spread the cards.

"Listen, Grantham. Most of what I told you and Einarson about myself is the bunk. Your uncle, Senator Walbourn, sent me down here. You were supposed to be in Paris. A lot of your dough was being shipped to Belgrade. The Senator was leery of the racket, didn't know whether you were playing a game or somebody was putting over a fast one. I went to Belgrade, traced you here, and came here, to run into what I ran into. I've traced the money to you, have talked to you. That's all I was hired to do. My job's done—unless there's anything I can do for you now."

"Not a thing," he said very calmly. "Thanks, just the same." He stood up, yawning. "Perhaps I'll see you again before you leave for the United States."

"Yeah." It was easy for me to make my voice match his in indifference: I hadn't a cargo of rage to hide. "Good night."

I went down to my room, got into bed, and, not having anything to think about, went to sleep.

CHAPTER VII

LIONEL'S PLANS

I SLEPT till late the next morning and then had breakfast in my room. I was in the middle of it when knuckles tapped my door. A stocky man in a wrinkled gray uniform, set off with a short, thick sword, came in, saluted, gave me a square white envelope, looked hungrily at the American cigarettes on

my table, smiled and took one when I offered them, saluted again, and went out.

The square envelope had my name written on it in a small, very plain and round, but not childish, handwriting. Inside was a note from the same pen:

> The Minister of Police regrets that departmental affairs prevent his receiving you this afternoon.

It was signed "Romaine Frankl," and had a postscript:

> If it's convenient for you to call on me after nine this evening, perhaps I can save you some time.
>
> R. F.

Below this an address was written.

I put the note in my pocket and called: "Come in," to another set of knocking knuckles.

LIONEI GRANTHAM entered. His face was pale and set.

"Good morning," I said, making it cheerfully casual, as if I attached no importance to last night's rumpus. "Had breakfast yet? Sit down, and——"

"Oh, yes, thanks. I've eaten." His handsome red face was reddening. "About last night—I was——"

"Forget it! Nobody likes to have his business pried into."

"That's good of you," he said, twisting his hat in his hands. He cleared his throat. "You said you'd — ah — do — ah — help me if I wished."

"Yeah. I will. Sit down."

He sat down, coughed, ran his tongue over his lips.

"You haven't said anything to any one about last night's affair with the soldier?"

"No," I said.

"Will you not say anything about it?"

"Why?"

He looked at the remains of my breakfast and didn't answer. I lit a cigarette to go with my coffee and waited. He stirred uneasily in his chair and, without looking up, asked:

"You know Mahmoud was killed last night?"

"The man in the restaurant with you and Einarson?"

"Yes. He was shot down in front of his house a little after midinght."

"Einarson?"

The boy jumped.

"No!" he cried. "Why do you say that?"

"Einarson knew Mahmoud had paid the soldier to wipe him out, so he plugged Mahmoud, or had him plugged. Did you tell him what I told you last night?"

"No." He blushed. "It's embarrassing to have one's family sending guardians after one."

I made a guess:

"He told you to offer me the job he spoke of last night, and to caution me against talking about the soldier. Didn't he?"

"Y-e-s."

"Well, go ahead and offer."

"But he doesn't know you're——"

"What are you going to do, then?" I asked. "If you don't make me the offer, you'll have to tell him why."

"Oh, Lord, what a mess!" he said wearily, putting elbows on knees, face between palms, looking at me with the harried eyes of a boy finding life too complicated.

HE WAS ripe for talk. I grinned at him, finished my coffee, and waited.

"You know I'm not going to be led home by an ear," he said with a sudden burst of rather childish defiance.

"You know I'm not going to try to take you," I soothed him.

We had some more silence after

that. I smoked while he held his head and worried. After a while he squirmed in his chair, sat stiffly upright, and his face turned perfectly crimson from hair to collar.

"I'm going to ask for your help," he said, pretending he didn't know he was blushing. "I'm going to tell you the whole foolish thing. If you laugh, I'll—— You won't laugh, will you?"

"If it's funny I probably will, but that needn't keep me from helping you."

"Yes, do laugh! It's silly! You ought to laugh!" He took a deep breath. "Did you ever—did you ever think you'd like to be a——" he stopped, looked at me with a desperate sort of shyness, pulled himself together, and almost shouted the last word—"king?"

"Maybe. I've thought of a lot of things I'd like to be, and that might be one of 'em."

"I met Mahmoud at an embassy ball in Constantinople," he dashed into the story, dropping his words quickly as if glad to get rid of them. "He was President Semich's secretary. We got quite friendly, though I wasn't especially fond of him. He persuaded me to come here with him, and introduced me to Colonel Einarson. Then they — there's really no doubt that the country is wretchedly governed. I wouldn't have gone into it if that hadn't been so.

"A revolution was being prepared. The man who was to lead it had just died. It was handicapped, too, by a lack of money. Believe this—it wasn't all vanity that made me go into it. I believed—I still believe—that it would have been—will be—for the good of the country. The offer they made me was that if I would finance the revolution I could be—could be king.

"Now wait! The Lord knows it's bad enough, but don't think it sillier than it is. The money I have would go a long way in this small, impoverished country. Then, with an American ruler, it would be easier—it ought to be—for the country to borrow in America or England. Then there's the political angle. Muravia is surrounded by four countries, any one of which is strong enough to annex it if it wants. Even Albania, now that it is a protégé of Italy's. Muravia has stayed independent so far only because of the jealousy among its stronger neighbors and because it hasn't a seaport. But with the balance shifting—with Greece, Italy, and Albania allied against Jugoslavia for control of the Balkans—it's only a matter of time before something will happen here, as it now stands.

"But with an American ruler—and if loans in America and England were arranged, so we had their capital invested here—there would be a change in the situation. Muravia would be in a stronger position, would have at least some slight claim on the friendship of stronger powers. That would be enough to make the neighbors cautious.

"Albania, shortly after the war, thought of the same thing, and offered its crown to one of the wealthy American Bonapartes. He didn't want it. He was an older man and had already made his career. I did want my chance when it came. There were"—some of the embarrassment that had left him during his talking returned—"there were kings back in the Grantham lines. We trace our descent from James the Fourth, of Scotland. I wanted—it was nice to think of carrying the line back to a crown.

"We weren't planning a violent revolution. Einarson holds the army.

We simply had to use the army to force the Deputies—those who were not already with us—to change the form of government and elect me king. My descent would make it easier than if the candidate were one who hadn't royal blood in him. It would give me a certain standing in spite—in spite of my being young, and—and the people really want a king, especially the peasants. They don't think they're really entitled to call themselves a nation without one. A president means nothing to them—he's simply an ordinary man like themselves. So, you see, I—— It was—— Go ahead, laugh! You've heard enough to know how silly it is!" His voice was high-pitched, screechy. "Laugh! Why don't you laugh?"

"What for?" I asked. "It's crazy, God knows, but not silly. Your judgment was gummy, but your nerve's all right. You've been talking as if this were all dead and buried. Has it flopped?"

"No, it hasn't," he said slowly, frowning, "but I keep thinking it has. Mahmoud's death shouldn't change the situation, yet I've a feeling it's all over."

"MUCH of your money sunk?"

"I don't mind that. But—well—suppose the American newspapers get hold of the story, and they probably will. You know how ridiculous they could make it. And then the others who'll know about it—my mother and uncle and the trust company. I won't pretend I'm not ashamed to face them. And then——" His face got red and shiny. "And then Valeska — Miss Radnjak — her father was to have led the revolution. He did lead it—until he was murdered. She is—I never could be good enough for her." He said this in a peculiarly idiotic tone of awe. "But I've hoped that perhaps by carrying on her father's work, and if I had something besides mere money to offer her — if I had done something — made a place for myself—perhaps she'd—you know."

I said: "Uh-huh."

"What shall I do?" he asked earnestly. "I can't run away. I've got to see it through for her, and to keep my own self-respect. But I've got that feeling that it's all over. You offered to help me. Help me. Tell me what I ought to do!"

"You'll do what I tell you—if I promise to bring you through with a clean face?" I asked, just as if steering millionaire descendents of Scotch kings through Balkan plots were an old story to me, merely part of the day's work.

"Yes!"

"What's the next thing on the revolutionary program?"

"There's a meeting to-night. I'm to bring you."

"What time?"

"Midnight."

"I'll meet you here at eleven-thirty. How much am I supposed to know?"

"I was to tell you about the plot, and to offer you whatever inducements were necessary to bring you in. There was no definite arrangement as to how much or how little I was to tell you."

CHAPTER VIII

AN ENLIGHTENING INTERVIEW

AT NINE-THIRTY that night a cab set me down in front of the address the Minister of Police's secretary had given in her note. It was a small two-story house in a badly paved street on the city's eastern edge. A middle-aged woman in very clean, stiffly starched, ill-fitting clothes opened the door for me. Before I

could speak, Romaine Frankl, in a sleeveless pink satin gown, floated into sight behind the woman, smiling, holding out a small hand to me.

"I didn't know you'd come," she said.

"Why?" I asked, with a great show of surprise at the notion that any man would ignore an invitation from her, while the servant closed the door and took my coat and hat.

We were standing in a dull-rose-papered room, finished and carpeted with oriental richness. There was one discordant note in the room—an immense leather chair.

"We'll go upstairs," the girl said, and addressed the servant with words that meant nothing to me, except the name Marya. "Or would you"—she turned to me and English again—"prefer beer to wine?"

I said I wouldn't, and we went upstairs, the girl climbing ahead of me with her effortless appearance of being carried. She took me into a black, white, and gray room that was very daintily furnished with as few pieces as possible, its otherwise perfect feminine atmosphere spoiled by the presence of another of the big padded chairs.

The girl sat on a gray divan, pushing away a stack of French and Austrian magazines to make a place for me beside her. Through an open door I could see the painted foot of a Spanish bed, a short stretch of purple counterpane, and half of a purple-curtained window.

"His Excellency was very sorry," the girl began, and stopped.

I was looking — not staring — at the big leather chair. I knew she had stopped because I was looking at it, so I wouldn't take my eyes away.

"Vasilije," she said, more distinctly than was really necessary, "was very sorry he had to postpone this afternoon's appointment. The assassination of the President's secretary—you heard of it?—made us put everything else aside for the moment."

"Oh, yes, that fellow Mahmoud—" slowly shifting my eyes from the leather chair to her. "Found out who killed him?"

Her black-ringed, black-centered eyes seemed to study me from a distance while she shook her head, jiggling the nearly black curls.

"Probably Einarson," I said.

"You haven't been idle." Her lower lids lifted when she smiled, giving her eyes a twinkling effect.

The servant Marya came in with wine and fruit, put them on a small table beside the divan, and went away. The girl poured wine and offered me cigarettes in a silver box. I passed them up for one of my own. She smoked a king-size Egyptian cigarette—big as a cigar. It accentuated the smallness of her face and hand—which is probably why she favored that size.

"WHAT sort of revolution is this they've sold my boy?" I asked.

"It was a very nice one until it died."

"How come it died?"

"It—do you know anything about our history?"

"No."

"Well, Muravia came into existence after the war as a result of the fear and jealousy of four countries. The nine or ten thousand square miles that make this country aren't very valuable land. There's little here that any of those four countries especially wanted, but no three of them would agree to let the fourth have it. The only way to settle the thing was to make a separate country out of it. That was done in 1923.

"Doctor Semich was elected the

first president, for a ten-year term. He is not a statesman, not a politician, and never will be. But since he was the only Muravian who had ever been heard of outside his own town, it was thought that his election would give the new country some prestige. Besides, it was a fitting honor for Muravia's only great man. He was not meant to be anything but a figure-head. The real governing was to be done by General Danilo Radnjak, who was elected vice-president, which, here, is more than equivalent to Prime Minister. General Radnjak was a capable man. The army worshiped him, the peasants trusted him, and our *bourgeoisie* knew him to be honest, conservative, intelligent, and as good a business administrator as a military one.

"Doctor Semich is a very mild, elderly scholar with no knowledge whatever of worldly affairs. You can understand him from this—he is easily the greatest of living bacteriologists, but he'll tell you, if you are on intimate terms with him, that he doesn't believe in the value of bacteriology at all. 'Mankind must learn to live with bacteria as with friends,' he'll say. 'Our bodies must adapt themselves to diseases, so there will be little difference between having tuberculosis, for example, or not having it. That way lies victory. This making war on bacteria is a futile business. Futile but interesting. So we do it. Our poking around in laboratories is perfectly useless—but it amuses us.'

"Now when this delightful old dreamer was honored by his countrymen with the presidency, he took it in the worst possible way. He determined to show his appreciation by locking up his laboratory and applying himself heart and soul to running the government. Nobody expected or wanted that. Radnjak was to have been the government. For a while he did control the situation, and everything went well enough.

"BUT Mahmoud had designs of his own. He was Doctor Semich's secretary, and he was trusted. He began calling the President's attentions to various trespasses of Radnjak's on the presidential powers. Radnjak, in an attempt to keep Mahmoud from control, made a terrible mistake. He went to Doctor Semich and told him frankly and honestly that no one expected him, the President, to give all his time to executive business, and that it had been the intention of his countrymen to give him the honor of being the first president rather than the duties.

"Radnjak had played into Mahmoud's hands—the secretary became the actual government. Doctor Semich was now thoroughly convinced that Radnjak was trying to steal his authority, and from that day on Radnjak's hands were tied. Doctor Semich insisted on handling every governmental detail himself, which meant that Mahmoud handled it, because the President knows as little about statesmanship to-day as he did when he took office. Complaints—no matter who made them—did no good. Doctor Semich considered every dissatisfied citizen a fellow-conspirator of Radnjak's. The more Mahmoud was criticized in the Chamber of Deputies, the more faith Doctor Semich had in him. Last year the situation became intolerable, and the revolution began to form.

"Radnjak headed it, of course, and at least ninety percent of the influential men in Muravia were in it. The attitude of people as a whole, it is difficult to judge. They are mostly peasants, small land-owners, who ask only to be let alone. But there's no doubt they'd rather have

a king than a president, so the form was to be changed to please them. The army, which worshiped Radnjak, was in it. The revolution matured slowly. General Radnjak was a cautious, careful man, and, as this is not a wealthy country, there was not much money available.

"Two months before the date set for the outbreak, Radnjak was assassinated. And the revolution went to pieces, split up into half a dozen factions. There was no other man strong enough to hold them together. Some of these groups still meet and conspire, but they are without general influence, without real purpose. And this is the revolution that has been sold Lionel Grantham. We'll have more information in a day or two, but what we've learned so far is that Mahmoud, who spent a month's vacation in Constantinople, brought Grantham back here with him and joined forces with Einarson to swindle the boy.

"Mahmoud was very much out of the revolution, of course, since it was aimed at him. But Einarson had been in it with his superior, Radnjak. Since Radnjak's death Einarson has succeeded in transferring to himself much of the allegiance that the soldiers gave the dead general. They do not love the Icelander as they did Radnjak, but Einarson is spectacular, theatrical —has all the qualities that simple men like to see in their leaders. So Einarson had the army and could get enough of the late revolution's machinery in his hands to impress Grantham. For money he'd do it. So he and Mahmoud put on a show for your boy. They used Valeska Radnjak, the general's daughter, too. She, I think, was also a dupe. I've heard that the boy and she are planning to be king and queen. How much did he invest in this little farce?"

"Maybe as much as three million American dollars."

Romaine Frankl whistled softly and poured more wine.

CHAPTER IX

CONJECTURES

"HOW did the Mnister of Police stand, when the revolution was alive?" I asked.

"Vasilije," she told me, sipping wine between phrases, "is a peculiar man, an original. He is interested in nothing except his comfort. Comfort to him means enormous amounts of food and drink and at least sixteen hours of sleep each day, and not having to move around much during his eight waking hours. Outside of that he cares for nothing. To guard his comfort he has made the police department a model one. They've got to do their work smoothly and neatly. If they don't, crimes will go unpunished, people will complain, and those complaints might disturb His Excellency. He might even have to shorten his afternoon nap to attend a conference or meeting. That wouldn't do. So he insists on an organization that will keep crime down to a minimum, and catch the perpetrators of that minimum. And he gets it."

"Catch Radnjak's assassin?"

"Killed resisting arrest ten minutes after the murder."

"One of Mahmoud's men?"

The girl emptied her glass, frowning at me, her lifted lower lids putting a twinkle in the frown.

"You're not so bad," she said slowly, "but now it's my turn to ask: Why did you say Einarson killed Mahmoud?"

"Einarson knew Mahmoud had tried to have him and Grantham shot earlier in the evening."

"Really?"

"I saw a soldier take money from

Mahmoud, ambush Einarson and Grantham, and miss 'em with six shots."

She clicked a fingernail against her teeth.

"That's not like Mahmoud," she objected, "to be seen paying for his murders."

"Probably not," I agreed. "But suppose his hired man decided he wanted more pay, or maybe he'd only been paid part of his wages. What better way to collect than to pop out and ask for it in the street a few minutes before he was scheduled to turn the trick?"

She nodded, and spoke as if thinking aloud:

"Then they've got all they expect to get from Grantham, and each was trying to hog it by removing the other."

"WHERE you go wrong," I told her, "is in thinking that the revolution is dead."

"But Mahmoud wouldn't, for three million dollars, conspire to remove himself from power."

"Right! Mahmoud thought he was putting on a show for the boy. When he learned it wasn't a show—learned Einarson was in earnest—he tried to have him knocked off."

"Perhaps." She shrugged her smooth bare shoulders. "But now you're guessing."

"Yes? Einarson carries a picture of the Shah of Persia. It's worn, as if he handled it a lot. The Shah of Persia is a Russian soldier who went in there after the war, worked himself up until he had the army in his hands, became dictator, then Shah. Correct me if I'm wrong. Einarson is an Icelandic soldier who came in here after the war and has worked himself up until he's got the army in his hands. If he carries the Shah's picture and looks at it often enough to have it shabby from handling, does it mean he hopes to follow his example? Or doesn't it?"

Romaine Frankl got up and roamed around the room, moving a chair two inches here, adjusting an ornament there, shaking out the folds of a window-curtain, pretending a picture wasn't quite straight on the wall, moving from place to place with the appearance of being carried—a graceful small girl in pink satin.

She stopped in front of a mirror, moved a little to one side so she could see my reflection in it, and fluffed her curls while saying:

"Very well, Einarson wants a revolution. What will your boy do?"

"What I tell him."

"What will you tell him?"

"Whatever pays best. I want to take him home with all his money."

She left the mirror and came over to me, rumpled my hair, kissed my mouth, and sat on my knees, holding my face between small warm hands.

"Give me a revolution, nice man!" Her eyes were black with excitement, her voice throaty, her mouth laughing, her body trembling. "I detest Einarson. Use him and break him for me. But give me a revolution!"

I laughed, kissed her, and turned her around on my lap so her head would fit against my shoulder.

"We'll see," I promised. "I'm to meet the folks at midnight. Maybe I'll know then."

"You'll come back after the meeting?"

"Try to keep me away!"

CHAPTER X

EINARSON IN CONTROL

I GOT back to the hotel at eleven-thirty, loaded my hips with gun and blackjack, and went upstairs to Grantham's suite. He was alone, but said he ex-

pected Einarson. He seemed glad to see me.

"Tell me, did Mahmoud go to any of the meetings?" I asked.

"No. His part in the revolution was hidden even from most of those in it. There were reasons why he couldn't appear."

"There were. The chief one was that everybody knew he didn't want any revolts, didn't want anything but money."

Grantham chewed his lower lip and said: "Oh, Lord, what a mess!"

Colonel Einarson arrived, in a dinner coat, but very much the soldier, the man of action. His hand-clasp was stronger than it needed to be. His little dark eyes were hard and bright.

"You are ready, gentlemen?" he addressed the boy and me as if we were a multitude. "Excellent! We shall go now. There will be difficulties tonight. Mahmoud is dead. There will be those of our friends who will ask: 'Why now revolt?' Ach!" He yanked a corner of his flowing dark mustache. "I will answer that. Good souls, our confrères, but given to timidity. There is no timidity under capable leadership. You shall see!" And he yanked his mustache again. This military gent seemed to be feeling Napoleonic this evening. But I didn't write him off as a musical-comedy revolutionist—I remembered what he had done to the soldier.

We left the hotel, got into a machine, rode seven blocks, and went into a small hotel on a side street. The porter bowed to the belt when he opened the door for Einarson. Grantham and I followed the officer up a flight of stairs, down a dim hall. A fat, greasy man in his fifties came bowing and clucking to meet us. Einarson introduced him to me—the proprietor of the hotel. He took us into a low-ceilinged room where thirty or forty men got up from chairs and looked at us through tobacco smoke.

EINARSON made a short, very formal speech which I couldn't understand, introducing me to the gang. I ducked my head at them and found a seat beside Grantham. Einarson sat on his other side. Everybody else sat down again, in no especial order.

Colonel Einarson smoothed his mustache and began to talk to this one and that, shouting over the clamor of other voices when necessary. In an undertone, Lionel Grantham pointed out the more important conspirators to me—a dozen or more members of the Chamber of Deputies, a banker, a brother of the Minister of Finance (supposed to represent that official), half a dozen officers (all in civilian clothes tonight), three professors from the university, the president of a labor union, a newspaper publisher and his editor, the secretary of a students' club, a politician from out in the country, and a handful of small business men.

The banker, a white-bearded fat man of sixty, stood up and began a speech, staring intently at Einarson. He spoke deliberately, softly, but with a faintly defiant air. The Colonel didn't let him get far.

"Ach!" Einarson barked and reared up on his feet. None of the words he said meant anything to me, but they took the pinkness out of the banker's cheeks and brought uneasiness into the eyes around us.

"They want to call it off," Grantham whispered in my ear. "They won't go through with it now. I know they won't."

The meeting became rough. A lot of people were yelping at once, but nobody talked down Einarson's bellow. Everybody was standing up,

either very red or very white in the face. Fists, fingers, and heads were shaking. The Minister of Finance's brother—a slender, elegantly dressed man with a long, intelligent face—took off his nose glasses so savagely that they broke in half, screamed words at Einarson, spun on his heel, and walked to the door.

He pulled it open and stopped.

The hall was full of green uniforms. Soldiers leaned against the wall, sat on their heels, stood in little groups. They hadn't guns—only bayonets in scabbards at their sides. The Minister of Finance's brother stood very still at the door, looking at the soldiers.

A brown-whiskered, dark-skinned, big man, in coarse clothes and heavy boots, glared with red-rimmed eyes from the soldiers to Einarson, and took two heavy steps toward the Colonel. This was the country politician. Einarson blew out his lips and stepped forward to meet him. Those who were between them got out of the way.

Einarson roared and the countryman roared. Einarson made the most noise, but the countryman wouldn't stop on that account.

Colonel Einarson said: "Ach!" and spat in the countryman's face.

The countryman staggered back a step and one of his paws went under his brown coat. I stepped around Einarson and shoved the muzzle of my gun in the countryman's ribs.

Einarson laughed, called two soldiers into the room. They took the countryman by the arms and led him out. Somebody closed the door. Everybody sat down. Einarson made another speech. Nobody interrupted him. The white-whiskered banker made another speech. The Minister of Finance's brother rose to say half a dozen polite words, staring near-sightedly at Einarson, holding half of his broken glasses in each slender hand. Grantham, at a word from Einarson, got up and talked. Everybody listened very respectfully.

Einarson spoke again. Everybody got excited. Everybody talked at once. It went on for a long time. Grantham explained to me that the revolution would start early Thursday morning—it was now early Wednesday morning—and that the details were now being arranged for the last time. I doubted that anybody was going to know anything about the details, with all this hubbub going on. They kept it up until half-past three. The last couple of hours I spent dozing in a chair, tilted back against the wall in a corner.

GRANTHAM and I walked back to our hotel after the meeting. He told me we were to gather in the plaza at four o'clock the next morning. It would be daylight by six, and by then the government buildings, the President, most of the officials and Deputies who were not on our side, would be in our hands. A meeting of the Chamber of Deputies would be held under the eyes of Einarson's troops, and everything would be done as swiftly and regularly as possible.

I was to accompany Grantham as a sort of bodyguard, which meant, I imagined, that both of us were to be kept out of the way as much as possible. That was all right with me.

I left Grantham at the fifth floor, went to my room, ran cold water over my face and hands, and then left the hotel again. There was no chance of getting a cab at this hour, so I set out afoot for Romaine Frankl's house.

I had a little excitement on the way.

A wind was blowing in my face as

I walked. I stopped and put my back to it to light a cigarette. A shadow down the street slid over into a building's shadow. I was being tailed, and not very skilfully. I finished lighting my cigarette and went on my way until I came to a sufficiently dark side street. Turning into it, I stopped in a street-level dark doorway.

A man came puffing around the corner. My first crack at him went wrong—the blackjack took him too far forward, on the cheek. The second one got him fairly behind the ear. I left him sleeping there and went on to Romaine Frankl's house.

CHAPTER XI

A ROMANTIC INTERLUDE

THE servant Marya, in a woolly gray bathrobe, opened the door and sent me up to the black, white, and gray room, where the Minister's secretary, still in the pink gown, was propped up among cushions on the divan. A tray full of cigarette butts showed how she'd been spending her time.

"Well?" she asked as I moved her over to make a seat for myself beside her.

"Thursday morning at four we revolute."

"I knew you'd do it," she said, patting my hand.

"It did itself, though there were a few minutes when I could have stopped it by simply knocking our Colonel behind the ear and letting the rest of them tear him apart. That reminds me—somebody's hired man tried to follow me here tonight."

"What sort of a man?"

"Short, beefy, forty—just about my size and age."

"But he didn't succeed?"

"I slapped him flat and left him sleeping there."

She laughed and pulled my ear.

"That was Gopchek, our very best detective. He'll be furious."

"Well, don't sic any more of 'em on me. You can tell him I'm sorry I had to hit him twice, but it was his own fault. He shouldn't have jerked his head back the first time."

She laughed, then frowned, finally settling on an expression that held half of each.

"Tell me about the meeting," she commanded.

I told her what I knew. When I had finished she pulled my head down to kiss me, and held it down to whisper:

"You do trust me, don't you, dear?"

"Yeah. Just as much as you trust me."

"That's far from being enough," she said, pushing my face away with a hand flat against my nose.

Marya came in with a tray of food. We pulled the table around in front of the divan and ate.

"I don't quite understand you," Romaine said over a stalk of asparagus. "If you don't trust me why do you tell me things? As far as I know, you haven't done much lying to me. Why should you tell me the truth if you've no faith in me?"

"My susceptible nature," I explained. "I'm so overwhelmed by your beauty and charm and one thing and another that I can't refuse you anything."

"DON'T!" she exclaimed, suddenly serious. "I've capitalized that beauty and charm in half the countries in the world. Don't say things like that to me ever again. It hurts, because—because——" She pushed her plate back, started to reach for a cigarette, stopped her hand in mid-air, and looked at me with disagreeable eyes. "I love you," she said.

I took the hand that was hanging

in the air, kissed the palm of it, and asked:

"You love me more than any one else in the world?"

She pulled the hand away from me.

"Are you a bookkeeper?" she demanded. "Must you have amounts, weights, and measurements for everything?"

I grinned at her and tried to go on with my meal. I had been hungry. Now, though I had eaten only a couple of mouthfuls, my appetite was gone. I tried to pretend I still had the hunger I had lost, but it was no go. The food didn't want to be swallowed. I gave up the attempt and lighted a cigarette.

She used her left hand to fan away the smoke between us.

"You don't trust me," she insisted. "Then why do you put yourself in my hands?"

"Why not? You can make a flop of the revolution. That's nothing to me. It's not my party, and its failure needn't mean that I can't get the boy out of the country with his money."

"You don't mind a prison, an execution, perhaps?"

"I'll take my chances," I said. But what I was thinking was: if, after twenty years of scheming and slickering in big-time cities, I let myself get trapped in this hill village, I'd deserve all I got.

"And you've no feeling at all for me?"

"Don't be foolish." I waved my cigarette at my uneaten meal. "I haven't had anything to eat since eight o'clock last night."

She laughed, put a hand over my mouth, and said:

"I understand. You love me, but not enough to let me interfere with your plans. I don't like that. It's effeminate."

"You going to turn out for the revolution?" I asked.

"I'm not going to run through the streets throwing bombs, if that's what you mean."

"And Djudakovich?"

"He sleeps till eleven in the morning. If you start at four, you'll have seven hours before he's up." She said all this perfectly seriously. "Get it done in that time. Or he might decide to stop it."

"Yeah? I had a notion he wanted it."

"Vasilije wants nothing but peace and comfort."

"But listen, sweetheart," I protested. "If your Vasilije is any good at all, he can't help finding out about it ahead of time. Einarson and his army are the revolution. These bankers and deputies and the like that he's carrying with him to give the party a responsible look are a lot of movie conspirators. Look at 'em! They hold their meetings at midnight, and all that kind of foolishness. Now that they're actually signed up to something, they won't be able to keep from spreading the news. All day they'll be going around trembling and whispering together in odd corners."

"They've been doing that for months," she said. "Nobody pays any attention to them. And I promise you Vasilijie shan't hear anything new. I won't tell him, and he never listens to anything any one else says."

"All right." I wasn't sure it was all right, but it might be. "Now this row is going through—if the army follows Einarson?"

"Yes, and the army will follow him."

"Then, after it's over, our real job begins?"

She rubbed a flake of cigarette ash into the table cloth with a small pointed finger, and said nothing.

"Einarson's got to be dumped," I continued.

"We'll have to kill him," she said thoughtfully. "You'd better do it yourself."

CHAPTER XII

THE NIGHT BEFORE

I SAW Einarson and Grantham that evening, and spent several hours with them. The boy was fidgety, nervous, without confidence in the revolution's success, though he tried to pretend he was taking things as a matter of course. Einarson was full of words. He gave us every detail of the next day's plans. I was more interested in him than in what he was saying. He could put the revolution over, I thought, and I was willing to leave it to him. So while he talked I studied him, combing him over for weak spots.

I took him physically first—a tall, thick-bodied man in his prime, not as quick as he might have been, but strong and tough. He had an amply jawed, short-nosed, florid face that a fist wouldn't bother much. He wasn't fat, but he ate and drank too much to be hard-boiled, and your florid man can seldom stand much poking around the belt. So much for the gent's body.

Mentally, he wasn't a heavyweight. His revolution was crude stuff. It would get over chiefly because there wasn't much opposition. He had plenty of will-power, I imagined, but I didn't put a big number on that. People who haven't much brains have to develop will-power to get anywhere. I didn't know whether he had guts or not, but before an audience I guessed he'd make a grand showing, and most of this act would be before an audience. Off in a dark corner I had an idea he would go watery. He believed in himself—absolutely. That's ninety percent of leadership, so there was no flaw in him there. He didn't trust me. He had taken me in because as things turned out it was easier to do so than to shut the door against me.

He kept on talking about his plans. There was nothing to talk about. He was going to bring his soldiers in town in the early morning and take over the government. That was all the plan that was needed. The rest of it was the lettuce around the dish, but this lettuce part was the only part we could discuss. It was dull.

At eleven o'clock Einarson stopped talking and left us, making this sort of speech:

"Until four o'clock, gentlemen, when Muravia's history begins." He put a hand on my shoulder and commanded me: "Guard His Majesty!"

I said, "Uh-huh," and immediately sent His Majesty to bed. He wasn't going to sleep, but he was too young to confess it, so he went off willingly enough. I got a taxi and went out to Romaine's.

SHE was like a child the night before a picnic. She kissed me and she kissed the servant Marya. She sat on my knees, beside me, on the floor, on all the chairs, changing her location every half-minute. She laughed and talked incessantly, about the revolution, about me, about herself, about anything at all. She nearly strangled herself trying to talk while swallowing wine. She lit her big cigarettes and forgot to smoke them, or forgot to stop smoking them until they scorched her lips. She sang lines from songs in half a dozen languages. She made puns and jokes and goofy rhymes.

I left at three o'clock. She went down to the door with me, pulled my

head down to kiss my eyes and mouth.

"If anything goes wrong," she said, "come to the prison. We'll hold that until——"

"If it goes wrong enough I'll be brought there," I promised.

She wouldn't joke now.

"I'm going there now," she said. "I'm afraid Einarson's got my house on his list."

"Good idea," I said. "If you hit a bad spot get word to me."

I walked back to the hotel through the dark streets—the lights were turned off at midnight—without seeing a single other person, not even one of the gray-uniformed policemen. By the time I reached home rain was falling steadily.

In my room, I changed into heavier clothes and shoes, dug an extra gun—an automatic—out of my bag and hung it in a shoulder holster. Then I filled my pocket with enough amunition to make me bowlegged, picked up hat and raincoat, and went upstairs to Lionel Grantham's suite.

"It's ten to four," I told him. "We might as well go down to the plaza. Better put a gun in your pocket."

He hadn't slept. His handsome young face was as cool and pink and composed as it had been the first time I saw him, though his eyes were brighter now.

He got into an overcoat, and we went downstairs.

CHAPTER XIII

PROGRESS GOES "BETUNE"

RAIN drove into our faces as we went toward the center of the dark plaza. Other figures moved around us, though none came near. We halted at the foot of an iron statue of somebody on a horse.

A pale young man of extraordinary thinness came up and began to talk rapidly, gesturing with both hands, sniffing every now and then, as if he had a cold in his head. I couldn't understand a word he said.

The rumble of other voices began to compete with the patter of rain. The fat, white-whiskered face of the banker who had been at the meeting appeared suddenly out of the darkness and went back into it just as suddenly, as if he didn't want to be recognized. Men I hadn't seen before gathered around us, saluting Grantham with a sheepish sort of respect. A little man in a too big cape ran up and began to tell us something in a cracked, jerky voice. A thin, stooped man with glasses freckled by raindrops translated the little man's story into English for us:

"He says the artillery has betrayed us, and guns are being mounted in the government buildings to sweep the plaza at daybreak." There was an odd sort of hopefulness in his voice, and he added: "In that event, we can, naturally, do nothing."

"We can die," Lionel Grantham said gently.

There wasn't the least bit of sense to that crack. Nobody was here to die. They were all here because it was so unlikely that anybody would have to die, except perhaps a few of Einarson's soldiers. That's the sensible view of the boy's speech. But it's God's own truth that even I—a middle-aged detective who had forgotten what it was like to believe in fairies—felt suddenly warm inside my wet clothes. And if anybody had said to me: "This boy is a real king," I wouldn't have argued the point.

AN ABRUPT hush came in the murmuring around us, leaving only the rustle of rain, and the

tramp, tramp, tramp of orderly marching up the street—Einarson's men. Everybody commenced to talk at once, happily, expectantly, cheered by the approach of those whose part it was to do the heavy work.

An officer in a glistening slicker pushed through the crowd—a small, dapper boy with a too large sword. He saluted Grantham elaborately, and said in English, of which he seemed proud:

"Colonel Einarson's respects, Mister, and this progress goes betune."

I wondered what the last word meant.

Grantham smiled and said: "Convey my thanks to Colonel Einarson."

The banker appeared again, bold enough now to join us. Others who had been at the meeting appeared. We made an inner group around the statue, with the mob around us—more easily seen now in the gray of early morning. I didn't see the countryman into whose face Einarson had spat.

The rain soaked us. We shifted our feet, shivered, and talked. Daylight came slowly, showing more and more who stood around us wet and curious-eyed. On the edge of the crowd men burst into cheers. The rest of them took it up. They forgot their wet misery, laughed and danced, hugged and kissed one another. A bearded man in a leather coat came to us, bowed to Grantham, and explained that Einarson's own regiment could be seen occupying the Administration Building and the Executive Residence.

Day came fully. The mob around us opened to make way for an automobile that was surrounded by a squad of cavalrymen. It stopped in front of us. Colonel Einarson, holding a bare sword in his hand, stepped out of the car, saluted, and held the door open for Grantham and me. He followed us in, smelling of victory like a chorus girl of Coty. The cavalrymen closed around the car again, and we were driven to the Administration Building, through a crowd that yelled and ran red-faced and happy after us. It was all quite theatrical.

CHAPTER XIV

CORONATION

"THE city is ours," said Einarson, leaning forward in his seat, his sword's point on the car floor, his hands on its hilt. "The President, the Deputies, nearly every official of importance, is taken. Not a single shot fired, not a window broken!"

He was proud of his revolution, and I didn't blame him. I wasn't sure that he might not have brains, after all. He had had sense enough to park his civilian adherents in the plaza until his soldiers had done their work.

We got out at the Administration Building, walking up the steps between rows of infantrymen at present-arms, rain sparkling on their fixed bayonets. More green-uniformed soldiers presented arms along the corridors. We went into an elaborately furnished dining-room, where fifteen or twenty officers stood up to receive us. There were lots of speeches made. Everybody was triumphant. All through breakfast there was much talking. I didn't understand any of it. I attended to my eating.

After the meal we went to the Deputies' Chamber, a large, oval room with curved rows of benches and desks facing a raised platform. Besides three desks on the platform, some twenty chairs had been put there, facing the curved seats. Our breakfast party occupied these chairs. I noticed that Grantham

and I were the only civilians on the platform. None of our fellow conspirators were there, except those who were in Einarson's army. I wasn't so fond of that.

Grantham sat in the first row of chairs, between Einarson and me. We looked down on the Deputies. There were perhaps a hundred of them distributed among the curved benches, split sharply in two groups. Half of them, on the right side of the room, were revolutionists. They stood up and hurrahed at us. The other half, on the left, were prisoners. Most of them seemed to have dressed hurriedly. They looked at us with uneasy eyes.

Around the room, shoulder to shoulder against the wall except on the platform and where the doors were, stood Einarson's soldiers.

An old man came in between two soldiers—a mild-eyed old gentleman, bald, stooped, with a wrinkled, clean-shaven, scholarly face.

"Doctor Semich," Grantham whispered.

The President's guards took him to the center one of the three desks on the platform. He paid no attention to us who were sitting on the platform, and he did not sit down.

A red-haired Deputy—one of the revolutionary party—got up and talked. His fellows cheered when he had finished. The President spoke—three words in a very dry, very calm voice, and left the platform to walk back the way he had come, the two soldiers accompanying him.

"Refused to resign," Grantham informed me.

The red-haired Deputy came up on the platform and took the center desk. The legislative machinery began to grind. Men talked briefly, apparently to the point—revolutionists. None of the prisoner Deputies rose. A vote was taken. A few of the in-wrongs didn't vote. Most of them seemed to vote with the ins.

"They've revoked the constitution," Grantham whispered.

The Deputies were hurrahing again—those who were there voluntarily. Einarson leaned over and mumbled to Grantham and me:

"That is as far as we may safely go today. It leaves all in our hands."

"Time to listen to a suggestion?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Will you excuse us a moment?" I said to Grantham, and got up and walked to one of the rear corners of the platform.

Einarson followed me, frowning suspiciously.

"WHY not give Grantham his crown now?" I asked when we were standing in the corner, my right shoulder touching his left, half facing each other, half facing the corner, our backs to the officers who sat on the platform, the nearest less than ten feet away. "Push it through. You can do it. There'll be a howl, of course. Tomorrow, as a concession to that howl, you'll make him abdicate. You'll get credit for that. You'll be fifty percent stronger with the people. Then you will be in a position to make it look as if the revolution was his party, and that you were the patriot who kept this newcomer from grabbing the throne. Meanwhile you'll be dictator, and whatever else you want to be when the time comes. See what I mean? Let him bear the brunt. You catch yours on the rebound."

He liked the idea, but he didn't like it to come from me. His little dark eyes pried into mine.

"Why should you suggest this?" he asked.

"What do you care? I promise

you he'll abdicate within twenty-four hours."

He smiled under his mustache and raised his head. I knew a major in the A. E. F. who always raised his head like that when he was going to issue an unpleasant order. I spoke quickly:

"My raincoat—do you see it's folded over my left arm?"

He said nothing, but his eyelids crept together.

"You can't see my left hand," I went on.

His eyes were slits, but he said nothing.

"There's an automatic in it," I wound up.

"Well?" he asked contemptuously.

"Nothing—only—get funny, and I'll let your guts out."

"Ach!"—he didn't take me seriously—"and after that?"

"I don't know. Think it over carefully, Einarson. I've deliberately put myself in a position where I've got to go ahead if you don't give in. I can kill you before you do anything. I'm going to do it if you don't give Grantham his crown now. Understand? I've got to. Maybe—most likely—your boys would get me afterward, but you'd be dead. If I back down now, you'll certainly have me shot. So I can't back down. If neither of us backs down, we'll both take the leap. *I've* gone too far to weaken now. *You'll* have to give in. Think it over. I can't possibly be bluffing."

He thought it over. Some of the color washed out of his face, and a little rippling movement appeared in the flesh of his chin. I crowded him along by moving the raincoat enough to show him the muzzle of the gun that actually was there in my left hand. I had the big heaver—he hadn't nerve enough to take a chance on dying in his hour of victory. A little earlier, a little later, I might have had to gun him. Now I had him.

HE STRODE across the platform to the desk at which the red-head sat, drove the red-head away with a snarl and a gesture, leaned over the desk, and bellowed down into the chamber. I stood a little to one side of him, a little behind, close enough so no one could get between us.

No Deputy made a sound for a long minute after the Colonel's bellow had stopped. Then one of the anti-revolutionists jumped to his feet and yelped bitterly. Einarson pointed a long brown finger at him. Two soldiers left their places by the wall, took the Deputy roughly by neck and arms, and dragged him out. Another Deputy stood up, talked, and was removed. After the fifth drag-out everything was peaceful.

Einarson put a question and got a unanimous answer.

He turned to me, his gaze darting from my face to my raincoat and back, and said: "That is done."

"We'll have the coronation now," I commanded. "Any kind of ceremony, so it's short."

I missed most of the ceremony. I was busy keeping my hold on the florid officer, but finally Lionel Grantham was officially installed as Lionel the First, King of Muravia. Einarson and I congratulated him, or whatever it was, together. Then I took the officer aside.

"We're going to take a walk," I said. "No foolishness. Take me out a side door."

I had him now, almost without needing the gun. He would have to deal quietly with Grantham and me—kill us without any publicity—if he were to avoid being laughed at—this man who had let himself be

stuck up and robbed of a throne in the middle of his army.

We went roundabout from the Administration Building to the Hotel of the Republic without meeting any one who knew us. The population was all in the plaza. We found the hotel deserted. I made him run the elevator to my floor, and herded him down the corridor to my room.

I tried the door, found it unlocked, let go the knob, and told him to go in. He pushed the door open and stopped.

Romaine Frankl was sitting cross-legged in the middle of my bed, sewing a button on one of my union suits.

CHAPTER XV

BARGAIN HUNTERS

I PRODDED Einarson into the room and closed the door. Romaine looked at him and at the automatic that was now uncovered in my hand. With burlesque disappointment she said:

"Oh, you haven't killed him yet!"

Colonel Einarson stiffened. He had an audience now—one that saw his humiliation. He was likely to do something. I'd have to handle him with gloves, or—maybe the other way was better. I kicked him on the ankle and snarled:

"Get over in the corner and sit down!"

He spun around to me. I jabbed the muzzle of the pistol in his face, grinding his lip between it and his teeth. When his head jerked back I slammed him in the belly with my other fist. He grabbed for air with a wide mouth. I pushed him over to a chair in one corner of the room.

Romaine laughed and shook a finger at me, saying:

"You're a rowdy!"

"What else can I do?" I protested, chiefly for my prisoner's benefit. "When somebody's watching him he gets notions that he's a hero. I stuck him up and made him crown the boy king. But this bird has still got the army, which is the government. I can't let go of him, or both Lionel the Once and I will gather lead. It hurts me more than it does him to have to knock him around, but I can't help myself. I've got to keep him sensible."

"You're doing wrong by him," she replied. "You've got no right to mistreat him. The only polite thing for you to do is to cut his throat in a gentlemanly manner."

"Ach!" Einarson's lungs were working again.

"Shut up," I yelled at him, "or I'll come over there and knock you double-jointed."

He glared at me, and I asked the girl: "What'll we do with him? I'd be glad to cut his throat, but the trouble is, his army might avenge him, and I'm not a fellow who likes to have anybody's army avenging on him."

"WE'LL give him to Vasilije," she said, swinging her feet over the side of the bed and standing up. "He'll know what to do."

"Where is he?"

"Upstairs in Grantham's suite, finishing his morning nap, I suppose."

Then she said lightly, casually, as if she hadn't been thinking seriously about it: "So you had the boy crowned?"

"I did. You want it for your Vasilije? Good! We want five million American dollars for our abdication. Grantham put in three to finance the doings, and he deserves a profit. He's been regularly elected by the Deputies. He's got no real backing here, but he can get support from

the neighbors. Don't overlook that. There are a couple of countries not a million miles away that would gladly send in an army to support a legitimate king in exchange for whatever concessions they liked. But Lionel the First isn't unreasonable. He thinks it would be better for you to have a native ruler. All he asks is a decent provision from the government. Five million is low enough, and he'll abdicate tomorrow. Tell that to your Vasilije."

She went around me to avoid passing between my gun and its target, stood on tiptoe to kiss my ear, and said:

"You and your king are a couple of brigands. I'll be back in a few minutes."

She went out.

"Ten millions," Colonel Einarson said.

"I can't trust you now," I said. "You'd pay us off in front of a firing squad."

"You can trust this pig Djudakovich?"

"He's got no reason to hate us."

"He will when he's told of you and his Romaine."

I laughed.

"Besides, how can he be king? Ach! What is his promise to pay if he cannot become in a position to pay? Suppose even I am dead. What will he do with my army? Ach! You have seen the pig! What kind of king is he?"

"I don't know," I said truthfully. "I'm told he was a good Minister of Police because inefficiency would spoil his comfort. Maybe he'd be a good dictator or king for the same reason. I've seen him once. He's a bloated mountain, but there's nothing ridiculous about him. He weighs a ton, and moves without shaking the floor. I'd be afraid to try on him what I did to you."

This insult brought the soldier up on his feet, very tall and straight. His eyes burned at me while his mouth hardened in a thin line. He was going to make trouble for me before I was rid of him. I scowled at him and wondered what I should do next.

THE door opened and Vasilije Djudakovich came in, followed by the girl. I grinned at the fat Minister. He nodded without smiling. His little dark eyes moved coldly from me to Einarson.

The girl said:

"The government will give Lionel the First a draft for four million dollars, American, on either a Vienna or Athens bank, in exchange for his abdication." She dropped her official tone and added: "That's every nickel I could get out of him."

"You and your Vasilije are a couple of rotten bargain hunters," I complained. "But we'll take it. We've got to have a special train to Salonikiâ€”one that will put us across the border before the abdication goes into effect."

"That will be arranged," she promised.

"Good! Now to do all this your Vasilije has got to take the army away from Einarson. Can he do it?"

"Ach!" Colonel Einarson reared up his head, swelled his thick chest. "That is precisely what he has got to do!"

The fat man grumbled sleepily through his yellow beard. Romaine came over and put a hand on my arm.

"Vasilije wants a private talk with Einarson. Leave it to him. We'll go upstairs."

I agreed and offered Djudakovich my automatic. He paid no attention to the gun or to me. He was look-

ing with a clammy sort of patience at the officer. I went out with the girl and closed the door. At the foot of the stairs I took her by the shoulders and turned her around.

"Can I trust your Vasilije?" I asked.

"Oh my dear, he could handle half a dozen Einarsons."

"I don't mean that. He won't try to gyp me?"

She frowned at me, asking: "Why should you start worrying about that now?"

"He doesn't seem to be exactly all broken out with friendliness."

She laughed, and twisted her face around to bite at one of my hands on her shoulders.

"He's got ideals," she explained. "He despises you and your king for a pair of adventurers who are making a profit out of his country's troubles. That's why he's so sniffy. But he'll keep his word."

Maybe he would, I thought, but he hadn't given me his word—the girl had.

"I'm going over to see His Majesty," I said. "I won't be long—then I'll join you up in his suite. What was the idea of the sewing act? I had no buttons off."

"You did," she contradicted me, rummaging in my pocket for cigarettes. "I pulled one off when one of our men told me you and Einarson were headed this way. I thought it would look domestic."

CHAPTER XVI

LIONEL REX

I FOUND my king in a wine and gold drawing-room in the Executive Residence, surrounded by Muravia's socially and politically ambitious. Uniforms were still in the majority, but a sprinkling of civilians had finally got to him, along with their wives and daughters. He was too occupied to see me for a few minutes, so I stood around, looking the folks over. Particularly one—a tall girl in black, who stood apart from the others, at a window.

I noticed her first because she was beautiful in face and body, and then I studied her more closely because of the expression in the brown eyes with which she watched the new king. If ever anybody looked proud of anybody else, this girl did of Grantham. The way she stood there, alone, by the window, and looked at him—he would have had to be at least a combination of Apollo, Socrates, and Alexander to deserve half of it. Valeska Radnjak, I supposed.

I LOOKED at the boy. His face was proud and flushed, and every two seconds turned toward the girl at the window while he listened to the jabbering of the worshipful group around him. I knew he wasn't any Apollo-Socrates-Alexander, but he managed to look the part. He had found a spot in the world that he liked. I was half sorry he couldn't hang on to it, but my regrets didn't keep me from deciding that I had wasted enough time.

I pushed through the crowd toward him. He recognized me with the eyes of a park sleeper being awakened from sweet dreams by a night-stick on his shoe-soles. He excused himself to the others and took me down a corridor to a room with stained glass windows and richly carved office furniture.

"This was Doctor Semich's office," he told me. "I shall——" He broke off and looked away from me.

"You'll be in Greece by to-morrow," I said bluntly.

He frowned at his feet, a stubborn frown.

"You ought to know you can't hold on," I argued. "You may think everything is going smoothly. If you do, you're deaf, dumb, and blind. I put you in with the muzzle of a gun against Einarson's liver. I've kept you in this long by kidnaping him. I've made a deal with Djudakovich—the only strong man I've seen here. It's up to him to handle Einarson. I can't hold him any longer. Djudakovich will make a good dictator, and a good king later, if he wants it. He promises you four million dollars and a special train and safe-conduct to Saloniki. You go out with your head up. You've been a king. You've taken a country out of bad hands and put it into good—this fat guy is real. And you've made yourself a million profit."

Grantham looked at me and said: "No. You go. I shall see it through. These people have trusted me, and I shall——"

"My God, that's old Doc Semich's line! These people haven't trusted you—not a bit of it. I'm the people who trusted you. I made you king, understand? I made you king so you could go home with your chin up—not so you could stay here and make an ass of yourself! I bought help with promises. One of them was that you'd get out within twenty-four hours. You've got to keep the promises I made in your name. The people trusted you, huh? You were crammed down their throats, my son! And I did the cramming! Now I'm going to uncram you. If it happens to be tough on your romance—if your Valeska won't take any price less than this lousy country's throne—that's——"

"That's enough." His voice came from some point at least fifty feet above me. "You shall have your abdication. I don't want the money. You will send word to me when the train is ready."

"Write the get-out now," I ordered.

He went over to the desk, found a sheet of paper, and with a steady hand wrote that in leaving Muravia he renounced his throne and all rights to it. He signed the paper *Lionel Rex* and gave it to me. I pocketed it and began sympathetically:

"I can understand your feelings, and I'm sorry that—"

He put his back to me and walked out of the room. I returned to the hotel.

At the fifth floor I left the elevator and walked softly to the door of my room. No sound came through. I tried the door, found it unlocked, and went in. Emptiness. Even my clothes and bags were gone. I went up to Grantham's suite.

Djudakovich, Romaine, Einarson, and half the police force were there.

CHAPTER XVII

MOB LAW

COLONEL EINARSON sat very erect in an armchair in the middle of the room. Dark hair and mustache bristled. His chin was out, muscles bulged everywhere in his florid face, his eyes were hot—he was in one of his finest scrapping moods. That came of giving him an audience.

I scowled at Djudakovich, who stood on wide-spread giant's legs with his back to a window. Why hadn't the fat fool known enough to keep Einarson off in a lonely corner, where he could be handled? Djuda-

kovich looked sleepily at my scowl.

Romaine floated around and past the policeman who stood or sat everywhere in the room, and came to where I stood, just inside the door.

"Are your arrangements all made?" she asked.

"Got the abdication in my pocket."

"Give it to me."

"Not yet," I said. "First I've got to know that your Vasilije is as big as he looks. Einarson doesn't look squelched to me. Your fat boy ought to have known he'd blossom out in front of an audience."

"There's no telling what Vasilije is up to," she said lightly, "except that it will be adequate."

I wasn't as sure of that as she was. Djudakovich rumbled a question at her, and she gave him a quick answer. He rumbled some more—at the policemen. They began to go away from us, singly, in pairs, in groups. When the last one had gone the fat man pushed words out between his yellow whiskers at Einarson. Einarson stood up, chest out, shoulders back, grinning confidently under his flowing dark mustache.

"What now?" I asked the girl.

"Come along and you'll see," she said. Her breath came and went quickly, and the gray of her eyes was almost as dark as the black.

THE four of us went downstairs and out the hotel's front door. The rain had stopped. In the plaza was gathered most of Stefania's population, thickest in front of the Administration Building and Executive Residence. Over their heads we could see the sheepskin caps of Einarson's regiment, still around those buildings as he had left them.

We—or at least Einarson—were recognized and cheered as we crossed the plaza. Einarson and Djudakovich went side by side in front, the soldier marching, the fat giant waddling. Romaine and I went close behind them. We headed straight for the Administration Building.

"What is he up to?" I asked irritably.

She patted my arm, smiled excitedly, and said:

"Wait and see."

There didn't seem to be anything else to do—except worry while I waited.

We arrived at the foot of the Administration Building's stone steps. Bayonets had an uncomfortably cold gleam in the early evening light as Einarson's troops presented arms. We climbed the steps. On the broad top step Einarson and Djudakovich turned to face soldiers and citizens below. The girl and I moved around behind the pair. Her teeth were chattering, her fingers were digging into my arm, but her lips and eyes were smiling recklessly.

The soldiers who were around the Executive Residence came to join those already before us, pushing back the citizens to make room. Another detachment came up. Einarson raised his hand, bawled a dozen words, growled at Djudakovich, and stepped back, giving the blond giant the center of the stage.

Djudakovich spoke, a drowsy, effortless roar that could have been heard as far as the hotel. As he spoke, he took a paper out of his pocket and held it before him. There was nothing theatrical in his voice or manner. He might have been talking about anything not too important. But—looking at his audience, you'd have known it was important.

The soldiers had broken ranks to crowd nearer, faces were reddening, a bayoneted gun was shaken aloft here and there. Behind them the citizens were looking at one another

with frightened faces, jostling each other, some trying to get nearer, some trying to get away.

Djudakovich talked on. The turmoil grew. A soldier pushed through his fellows and started up the steps, others at his heels. Angry voices raised cries.

EINARSON cut in on the fat man's speech, stepping to the edge of the top step, bawling down at the upturned faces, with the voice of a man accustomed to being obeyed.

The soldiers on the steps tumbled down. Einarson bawled again. The broken ranks were slowly straightened, flourished guns were grounded. Einarson stood silent a moment, glowering at his troops, and then began an address. I couldn't understand his words any more than I had the fat man's, but there was no question about his impressiveness. And there was no doubt that the anger was going out of the faces below.

I looked at Romaine. She shivered and was no longer smiling. I looked at Djudakovich. He was as still and as emotionless as the mountain he resembled.

I wished I knew what it was all about, so I'd know whether it was wisest to shoot Einarson and duck through the apparently empty building behind us or not. I could guess that the paper in Djudakovich's hand had been evidence of some sort against the Colonel, evidence that would have stirred the soldiers to the point of attacking him if they hadn't been too accustomed to obeying him.

While I was wishing and guessing Einarson finished his address, stepped to one side, clicked his heels together, pointed a finger at Djudakovich, barked an order.

Down below, soldiers' faces were indecisive, shifty-eyed, but four of them stepped briskly out at their colonel's order and came up the steps. "So," I thought, "my fat candidate has lost! Well, he can have the firing squad. The back door for mine." My hand had been holding the gun in my coat pocket for a long time. I kept it there while I took a slow step back, drawing the girl with me.

"Move when I tell you," I muttered.

"Wait!" she gasped. "Look!"

THE fat giant, sleepy-eyed as ever, put out an enormous paw and caught the wrist of Einarson's pointing hand. Pulled Einarson down. Let go the wrist and caught the Colonel's shoulder. Lifted him off his feet with that one hand that held his shoulder. Shook him at the soldiers below. Shook Einarson at them with one hand. Shook his piece of paper—whatever it was—at them with the other. And I'm damned if one seemed any more strain on his monstrous arms than the other!

While he shook them—man and paper—he roared sleepily, and when he had finished roaring he flung his two handfuls down to the wild-eyed ranks. Flung them with a gesture that said, *"Here is the man and here is the evidence against him. Do what you like."*

And the soldiers who had cringed back into ranks at Einarson's command when he stood tall and domineering above them, did what could have been expected when he was tossed down to them.

They tore him apart—actually—piece by piece. They dropped their guns and fought to get at him. Those farther away climbed over those nearer, smothering them, trampling them. They surged back and forth in front of the steps, an insane pack of men turned wolves, savagely struggling to destroy a man who must have died before he had been down half a minute.

I put the girl's hand off my arm and went to face Djudakovich.

"Muravia's yours," I said. "I don't want anything but our draft and train. Here's the abdication."

Romaine swiftly translated my words and then Djudakovich's:

"The train is ready now. The draft will be delivered there. Do you wish to go over for Grantham?"

"No. Send him down. How do I find the train?"

"I'll take you," she said. "We'll go through the building and out a side door."

ONE of Djudakovich's detectives sat at the wheel of a car in front of the hotel. Romaine and I got in it. Across the plaza tumult was still boiling. Neither of us said anything while the car whisked us through darkening streets. She sat as far from me as the width of the rear seat would let her.

Presently she asked very softly:

"And now you despise me?"

"No." I reached for her. "But I hate mobs, lynchings—they sicken me. No matter how wrong the man is, if a mob's against him, I'm for him. The only thing I ever pray to God for is a chance some day to squat down behind a machine gun with a lynching party in front of me. I had no use for Einarson, but I wouldn't have given him that! Well, what's done is done. What was the document?"

"A letter from Mahmoud. He had left it with a friend to be given to Vasilije if anything ever happened to him. He knew Einarson, it seems, and prepared his revenge. The letter confessed his—Mahmoud's—part in the assassination of General Radnjak, and said that Einarson was also implicated. The army worshiped Radnjak, and Einarson wanted the army."

"Your Vasilije could have used that to chase Einarson out—without feeding him to those wolves," I complained.

She shook her head and said:

"Vasilije was right. Bad as it was, that was the way to do it. It's over and settled forever, with Vasilije in power. An Einarson alive, an army not knowing he had killed their idol—too risky. Up to the end Einarson thought he had power enough to hold his troops, no matter what they knew. He——"

"All right—it's done. And I'm glad to be through with this king business. Kiss me."

She did, and whispered:

"When Vasilije dies—and he can't live long, the way he eats—I'm coming to San Francisco."

"You're a cold-blooded hussy," I said.

LIONEL GRANTHAM, ex-king of Muravia, was only five minutes behind us in reaching our train. He wasn't alone. Valeska Radnjak, looking as much like the queen of something as if she had been, was with him. She didn't seem to be all broken up over the loss of her throne.

The boy was pleasant and polite enough to me during our rattling trip to Saloniki, but obviously not very comfortable in my company. His bride-to-be didn't know anybody but the boy existed, unless she happened to find some one else directly in front of her. So I didn't wait for their wedding, but left Saloniki on a boat that pulled out a couple of hours after we arrived.

I left the draft with them, of course. They decided to take out Lionel's three millions and return the fourth to Muravia. And I went back to San Francisco to quarrel with my boss over what he thought were unnecessary five- and ten-dollar items in my expense account.

Turning another bend in the tortuous path, he came face to face with a girl.

The Lily Garden

By SOPHIE WENZEL ELLIS

As a cure for shattered nerves, the botanical monstrosity cherished by Calvin Austin was not all that might have been desired. But the strange adventure had its compensations.

ALAN CONRAD sat on the broad veranda of his friend's country home, which lay in a lonely bend of the Ashley River. Half asleep, he sniffed at the warm night air, analyzing with the enjoyment of a learned botanist the commixture of delicious scents.

He was vaguely puzzled, because several recent puffs of tangy marsh breeze had brought a new odor which was heavier and richer than the perfumed breath of the azaleas, extending in an avenue from the veranda to the brink of the dark, lazy river.

Gradually the new fragrance strengthened until Conrad's bewildered senses reeled. He gasped and stared into the moon-silvered aisle between the azaleas.

Somewhere near the end of the flowery avenue he caught a short

glimpse of a dim, moving object, wraithlike in the moonlight. It looked like a woman dressed in white, and, oddly, it occurred to him that the perfume which tingled through every fibre of his body came from her.

A cold moisture beaded his face, and his cigar dropped unnoticed from his nerveless fingers.

"Tired, Alan? You look half asleep." Doctor Rutland, lying in the hammock, reached over to place a friendly hand on Conrad's shoulder. "Better turn in early for the good of those blasted nerves."

Conrad pulled himself together with an effort. "What is that overpowering odor, Bob?" he asked faintly. "It made me drunk for a moment."

Doctor Rutland sniffed the air carelessly. "I smell nothing but the azaleas."

"It was not the azaleas," insisted the other. "I should say it was the concentrated perfume of a thousand lilies. It is gone now, but I was a bit startled for a while."

Doctor Rutland laughed shortly. "Who has been telling you tales about poor old Calvin Austin's lily garden? It is two miles from here, and you could not possibly get a whiff from it, even when the wind is favorable, which is not the case to-night."

"I have heard nothing about the lily garden. Who was there to tell me but yourself?"

Doctor Rutland's cigar flared up brightly, as though he were drawing hard at it.

"The negroes tell queer tales about Calvin Austin," he admitted. "I have put him down as a simple nut—or maybe a genius. He spends his life among his lilies."

"I should like to see the lily garden before I leave."

The Doctor laughed quietly. "If you ever meet his daughter, Elaine, you'll be a frequent visitor. I believe she has already bewitched you, for I just got a glimpse of her, taking her usual lonely moonlight walk."

"Elaine!" Conrad said the name softly. All the romance of the scented darkness, the glamor and mystery of old Calvin Austin's lily garden, seemed woven in the name.

With an effort, he went on nonchalantly: "A dignified man of thirty-two, vacationing from the strenuous effects of teaching biology to undergraduates, is not likely to be interested in Elaines. They're out of my line."

The doctor laughed quietly. "Wait until you see her," he said cryptically.

THE next morning, before the sun was fairly risen, Conrad sauntered out with his specimen box. The fog was thick under the trees, squatting in fantastic shapes, billowing upward in living, moving curtains that sickened the yellow sunbeams.

As he followed a path branching off from the main road into the woods, he became conscious of irregular whiffs of fragrance on the wind—a rich, sensuous perfume, fecund with mystery; the heavy, ravishing incense of lilies. But while the odor warmed his blood with strange delight, he sensed in it an effluvium of menace, ominous in its very vagueness.

It had rained a little during the night, and the ground was soft. In the slushy soil he detected the faint imprint of a woman's foot, small and dainty and delicate of outline, suggestive of small, high-heeled slippers. There was fascination to Conrad in seeking and finding the out-

lines, something only faintly suggested in a few crushed blades of grass.

Soon he found a handkerchief, a frivolous, ineffectual bit of cambric and lace, with an embroidered "E" in the corner.

Turning another bend in the tortuous path, he came face to face with a girl. As she stood before him, with the opalescent banks of fog behind her making lacy drop-curtains, she was very beautiful in a pallid, delicate way. On her arm there dangled from a black velvet ribbon a soft garden hat, filled with wild flowers.

He must have been staring at her, for she flushed through her pallor and said in a cool voice:

"I beg your pardon, but I think you have my handkerchief. I unfortunately dropped it."

Conrad made a miserable attempt to speak his apology as he handed her the handkerchief. She thanked him with a simple sweetness which restored his mental equilibrium, and he fumbled for a card, presenting it with as much humble grace as he could command. Her white brow wrinkled in thought as she read the name; then she extended her hand impulsively.

"Can it possibly be that you are the Alan Conrad who writes those charming things for *Nature Lore?*"

"I'll have to plead guilty," he said gladly.

They were walking slowly under the shadows of the arching trees, she slightly in advance on the narrow path. When the sunlight, sifting through the thick leaves and fog, rested on her uncovered head, the mass of pale-gold braids, piled into a crown, flashed with a soft fluff of curls. So light was her step, it scarcely made a sound, save when she trod upon a dried twig. And every flutter of her white dress, every movement of her sweet body, sent forth intoxicating clouds of the strange lily fragrance—a rich *living* fragrance that seemed not the scented water of a young girl's boudoir, but a natural emanation from her own pores, and the breath of her delicate nostrils.

Only by a supreme effort was Conrad able to free himself from the gloomy sense of foreboding, which he attributed to the morbid fancy of a nerve-shattered man.

Presently he was aware that she was speaking:

"Father knows of you. He keeps everything that you write on file. I am Elaine Austin."

She offered him a smile that ran through his body in a white flame. Inwardly he blessed the good luck that had made him squander his early youth in tedious research work.

"I should like to meet your father," he said.

THE path stopped before a high brick wall, topped with sharp iron spikes, entered by a massive, padlocked gate. The girl inserted a key in the lock, and tugged at the gate with her small hands. It opened with a dismal groan of rusty hinges, and Conrad saw the lily garden.

Even as he looked, the remaining light fog-drifts lifted and rolled away, leaving an unbroken view for his enchanted eyes. He saw a broad expanse of flaming hues and purest white, broken by curious fountains throwing up jets of water that held the colored jewels of tiny rainbows, and narrow, winding paths that led into little paradises.

They found Calvin Austin issuing from a greenhouse—an oafish little man, with the lofty white forehead

of a thinker, and the pointed, dimpled chin of a pixie. For a moment he stood regarding Conrad, his eyes serene, questioning.

"It is Alan Conrad, father," explained Elaine, "your favorite contributor to *Nature Lore*."

Instantly the expression of the old man's face softened into a smile of friendliness.

"Welcome," he said, extending an earth-soiled hand. "We are fellow laborers, sir."

As they walked through the garden, Conrad saw that Austin had gathered his lily collections from the farthest corners of the world, and, through his genius, adapted them to the climate. Lilies everywhere, and only lilies; in stately white rows like virgins kneeling in prayer; in clumps of unnatural colors flaunting gigantic blooms that were almost sinister in their passionate resplendency; lilies filling richly carved urns with blooming incense; climbing lilies, water lilies, and strange hybrids which had sprung from his own experiments, distorted, hideous.

Exotic plants that could not live in the open were placed in greenhouses. There was one greenhouse which Austin did not offer to enter. As they passed it, a flood of intense, overpowering perfume poured out of the ventilators—the same fragrance that lingered about Elaine, yet a thousand times stronger. Conrad cast longing glances in its direction, but the botanist passed on.

Elaine flitted in and out among the flowers like a graceful, honey-seeking creature, often touching a bloom or laying her cheek against the petals as though she loved the fair flower which she so resembled.

Once, when she faced Conrad in a strong light, he noticed the delicate blue veins in her temples and a mournful brooding in the eyes which did not suggest perfect vigor. Even her white hands in the sunlight had a rosy transparency that was unnaturally delicate.

Conrad, stealing impassioned glances at the lovely girl, put his whole heart into an effort to make himself agreeable to old Calvin Austin, and was rewarded with a cordial invitation to repeat the visit. Before he left, Elaine fastened a lily in his buttonhole — a fragrant, bell-shaped blossom that resembled a huge pearl. The light touch of her fingers and the nearness of her sweet body throbbed into every fibre of his body.

HE WALKED back to the Rutland home in a dream. He had lost his specimen box somewhere, but it did not matter now. A rare moth that ordinarily he would have risked his neck to capture flitted around him, but he passed it with a cursory glance.

Doctor Rutland shouted at him as he approached the house, saying he thought he had been lost in the woods. Conrad tried to assume a careless air, and told him that he had become absorbed in some interesting studies.

"You're a bum liar," his friend threw at him. "How did you come by one of old Calvin Austin's pets?" He pointed to the lily in the other's buttonhole.

Conrad flushed and looked a little foolish, but he narrated his experience in detail. As he talked, Doctor Rutland looked at him keenly. Several times when the younger man dwelt upon the girl's beauty and charm, the doctor smiled quietly.

"Don't fall in love, Alan," he advised soberly. "I fear she is tubercular. Something is sapping her health."

A cold chill seized Conrad. "Are

you sure, Bob?" he asked, a little breathless.

"Not positive, of course; but it is evident that her strength is slowly declining. Old Austin seems to resent any allusion to his daughter's having a defect. He declares she is perfect, and refuses to let me examine her. I sometimes wonder if the old reprobate does not perform some infamous experiment upon her. He is enough of a fanatic for that."

THE next morning Conrad was a little shaken from a restless night. He called himself a fool for wasting his strength in wild speculations over Elaine, especially when the main cure for his nervous disorder was peace and rest. But in his troubled brain grew the thought that the scented lily garden was in some mysterious way responsible for the girl's delicacy.

During the forenoon, a negro boy appeared on horseback with his lost specimen box and a note from Calvin Austin, inviting him to luncheon. He blessed the traditional Southern hospitality which had prompted the botanist to think of him again so soon.

Two o'clock luncheon, served in a wistaria bower, was a feast. Conrad noticed that Elaine ate nothing but the most delicate fruits and vegetables, some of which were imported. As her slender fingers toyed with a fragrant *cherimoyer*, he thought of the humming-birds that sipped the nectar from her father's lilies. Again he was conscious of the elusive lily perfume which stirred from her garments as she moved, or remained languidly suggested in the atmosphere as her hands hovered over his cup in her offices as hostess.

After luncheon she took Conrad into the music room, while her father remained behind to give some instructions to a gardener. The young man sat in blissful intoxication, drinking in the glorious harmonies that she drew from a large, gilded harp, accompanied by her rich voice. A pleasant languor stole over him, and he leaned back in voluptuous mental enjoyment, watching the graceful musician.

She wore a white dress with loose sleeves, and once, as she reached for a chord, the sleeve slipped back almost to the shoulder, exposing her exquisite white arm. Conrad was close enough for his eyes not to deceive him, and he plainly saw on the upper part of her arm an area of tiny dots, almost imperceptible. They could be nothing else than the pricks made by a hypodermic needle. He gazed at the lovely arm in horror; then the sleeve again slipped back into place.

A hideous thought seized him: could she be an addict to drugs? Her appearance did not suggest this; her skin was too clear and pure, her blue eyes too limpid.

Suddenly she turned, as though he had aroused her by speaking, and their eyes met. At that moment the fragrance which constantly clung to her increased and rushed upon him in a flood. The invisible cloud of odor pressed upon him and sent its luxurious exhalation into his lungs and through his delicately agitated nerves, enslaving him, intoxicating him as he had been intoxicated two nights before on Doctor Rutland's veranda, when the white figure had appeared in the azalea avenue.

Conrad closed his eyes, giving himself to the aura of divine incense which closed around him in a scented veil, clinging, soothing, calling him to the pallid-faced girl before him. Even in his half-stupor, Conrad felt that it was a psychic appeal for—help.

After this occasion he managed to be with her at some time during each day. They passed many a pleasant hour among the lilies, and often Calvin Austin joined them.

Although Conrad always experienced a vague feeling of uneasiness while in the garden, he also felt the botanist's delight over the wonders in lily culture achieved by Austin. The man's whole life was centered in his work. His enthusiasm bordered on fanaticism.

"Who says that flowers have no sense of feeling?" he would argue. "When it rains, watch them lift their faces happily. When they are thirsty or injured by accident or a wanton hand, it is easy to see that they droop with suffering. I believe, sir, that plants see, feel, think, even as you and I—lilies especially, which are more highly organized than any other flower which I have studied."

At first Conrad secretly scoffed at his quaint fancies; but as he watched Eloine among the lilies he began to wonder if her father were entirely wrong. Often when the lovely girl passed a certain group of queerly misshapen hybrids that were the unnatural results of unsuccessful experiments, pausing sometimes to touch a bloom with her pale, bloodless hands, Conrad was acutely conscious of their response. He could see their sudden freshening, as though a gentle rain were bathing them. But, stranger than this, at these times, even with the bright sun overhead, he had the same weird, terrifying sensation that one has when he feels that he is being watched in the dark. The lilies were watching him, weighing him—these singular, crippled mongrels, a-tiptoe on their tall stems, as though to lift their pallid, distorted faces toward him.

Then came the afternoon that was to be forever burned upon the young man's memory. He had assisted Austin with some delicate grafting, which had brought forth abundant praise. Suddenly the botanist, with his small, oafish face aglow, suggested a visit to the greenhouse which he had never permitted Conrad to enter, and which he declared contained his chief treasure.

Elaine's hand was resting lightly on Conrad's arm when her father unlocked the door, and Conrad thought he detected a slight trembling in it. The inner door was separated from the outer by a sort of vestibule. Austin paused here a moment and stooped over a large box, from which he produced two grotesque-looking objects.

"These are masks to protect us from the heavy perfume," he explained. "The fragrance within would cause us to faint, and might even result in death."

The masks fitted over the mouth and the nose, and fastened around the back of the head by means of a broad leather strap. Austin adjusted one to his own face and the other to Conrad's.

"Is Elaine to be unprotected?" Conrad gasped in a muffled voice from behind the mask.

Calvin Austin laughed. "Elaine could not possibly be harmed by a lily," he said simply.

The two doors were built of heavy wood, strongly secured with locks. At first Conrad was puzzled why a structure of glass should be protected by such doors, when an intruder might easily break in through the glass. Then he gave thought to the reason why they had to enter carefully masked, and knew that Calvin Austin deemed his treasure sufficiently secured.

The interior of the greenhouse

was laid out in the artistic beauty so richly displayed in the whole garden. From a soft carpet of living emerald sprang lilies of such unnatural hue and form it was easily discernible that they were either hybrids or aliens from the jungles.

IN THE centre was a cleared space on which grew nothing but a solitary plant, bearing a single lily. When Conrad's eyes first fell upon it, a cry went from him; then his gaze settled into awed admiration.

The one giant bloom of purest white was supported on a stalk sprouting with leaves of tender, bright green that held the light in emerald haloes. The lone flower dazzled the atmosphere about it with a brighter glow, as though there were a hidden radiance under the pale, fleshy petals; and through the whole plant was visible an intensity of life that caused the leaves to quiver and the bloom to agitate its petals with a constant, restless quivering—movements made by the lily itself, for there was no wind astir in the greenhouse.

Yet, while Conrad admired its beauty as one admires an overgorgeous jewel, he was repelled by something ugly and sinister not visible in its glistening exterior. When he looked at it, he thought of a tropical snake he had once seen, brilliant with glorious coloring, yet hostile and deadly. This impression, no doubt, was created in him by two delicate spines, covered with fine hair, growing in the great, golden heart of the lily, which strangely resembled the fangs of a snake. Conrad found himself theorizing on their relation to the plant, for they were not a part of the reproductive structure; but, skilled botanist that he was, he could not determine what they were.

By this curious lily was a sort of seat built of rocks and soil, from which sprouted a pale green moss. Elaine slipped quietly into it and contemplated the flower with an expression of mingled reverence and repugnance. Conrad gazed at the two fair flowers side by side—girl and lily. The light that fell softly through the glass touched her bright hair with golden gleams, and the pale transparency of her skin looked too pure to be real.

"It is the consummation of my dreams," breathed Calvin Austin, whose hands were over the lily as though in benediction. "Would you say that this lily that quivers with life has no consciousness? See how it senses Elaine!"

The girl drew her fingers softly over the lily, and it seemed that the flower actually possessed nerve force, for the agitation was increased until every leaf twinkled with motion. The lily dipped slightly toward her, and a cold wave of disgust swept over Conrad when he saw the fang-like spines in the heart stretch and quiver as though they possessed animal life.

A slightly wilted leaf on the plant drew Austin's attention. While he was examining it in evident solicitude, Elaine seemed to shiver, and all the pretty color fled from her delicate face.

Conrad was standing somewhat apart from them. From a corner of his eye he saw Austin glance searchingly toward him, and then bend over Elaine and speak to her in a low voice, but not too low to reach Conrad's straining ears:

"To-night, Elaine."

"Oh, Father, again—so soon?"

Her voice caught in her throat.

"Yes, dear. It is necessary."

Conrad cursed him in his heart for bringing that pain and distress

to her sweet face. Elaine certainly dreaded some event that was to take place that night. He determined to play the spy and let his eyes judge.

IT WAS almost dusk when they left the greenhouse. Conrad said good-by and rode away. He went around to the path where he first had met Elaine, tied his horse, and proceeded on foot. It was dark by the time he reached the garden wall, and there was not much danger of his being seen if he scaled it. This was rather more difficult than he at first suspected. He dared not climb over the gate, but selected a part of the wall that was cut off from the view of the house. By much jumping and scrambling, he contrived to reach the spike-guarded top, and dropped to the other side, nursing several cuts and bruises. He had no definite plan, but concluded that the wisest course for him to take was to secrete himself near the greenhouse.

He was feeling in his pocket when his hand struck a patented pocket knife. One of the attachments was a glass-cutter, and it occurred to him that he could cut out a square of glass large enough for him to see into the greenhouse, and yet not so large that he would be overcome by the scent within. Austin had, of course, locked the masks in the vestibule.

Conrad went to work immediately, and, after judging the distance as well as he might, he selected a spot near the center and cut out a small square. He could not have chosen a better place, for he had a direct view of the lily, and yet, fortunately, the hole he had cut was sufficiently veiled with intervening foliage to escape detection.

After he had completed his task, he squatted down to wait in some thick clumps of plants near the greenhouse. His nerves were strained to painful intensity. The wind that stirred through the scented garden murmured obscurely, like whispering voices. A round-faced moon climbed up and threw a placid sheet of silver over the strangely beautiful flowers that Nature never had planned.

Conrad glanced at his watch, and the luminous dial showed nine o'clock. Just a few minutes later he heard approaching voices, and Elaine and her father passed close to his hiding-place.

"I am growing so tired of it, Father," floated over to him. "You wish me to live with one thing in view, and I am sure that Heaven intended me for a higher purpose.

"Hush!" came sternly. "Have you not qualities that no woman ever possessed before? Have you ever seen a girl with flesh as pure as yours, with breath as fragrant——"

Their voices trailed away as they passed, and Conrad heard no more. When he knew they were in the greenhouse, he crept to the hole he had cut and peered within. He was just in time to see Elaine drop into the seat by the solitary lily. She was paler than he had ever seen her, and her sweet face wore the resigned look of a suffering Madonna.

Then Calvin Austin turned back the loose sleeve of his daughter's gown. With a piece of cotton dipped in what Conrad judged to be antiseptic, he swabbed the soft, white flesh. Elaine's eyes were fixed in a sort of horrified fascination upon the lily.

The heavy perfume flowing from the aperture was making Conrad nauseated with its effluvium of evil, satanically delicious. He recognized the odor as the same fragrance that clung to Elaine at all times, yet it was a thousand times more potent.

Blindly he drew out his handkerchief and bound it over his folded cap to his nose and mouth. It did not keep out all odor, but prevented him from fainting.

ELAINE had covered her face with her free arm and sat in quiet resignation. Conrad got himself in readiness to view anything hideous that might occur; but what he did see took the breath from his lungs and turned him to a cold, dumb clod. Calvin Austin raised the beautiful arm of his daughter to the lily, and, with his free hand, bent the quivering flower against it. With a snakelike dart the slender fangs in the cup plunged into her flesh, hungrily, like a starved animal.

Conrad went momentarily mad from the horror of it, for he stared, inactive, while the vampirish thing suckled with a fluttering of leaves that seemed to signify a sensuous content. In his botanical research work he had often studied insectivorous plants, and had even seen in Africa a plant that devoured birds and other small animals. Through Austin's devilish skill, this bloodthirsty lily—this bastard born of beauty mated with horror—had been polluted with the carnivorous qualities of some hideous alien plant. Spawn of a madman's genius, neither flower nor beast, feeding on the pure blood of the girl, until its terrible beauty and its abominable perfume were woven into her very soul!

Conrad shouted with all the strength of his lungs and kicked his heavy boot against the glass, which shattered into fragments. Another kick made an opening large enough to admit his body. He tried to keep his head, and pressed his hand tightly against the bandage over his nose. Half suffocated, he rushed upon Austin. It was the sight of Elaine's pale, frightened face that stayed the blow he would have dealt the old man. Scarcely conscious of what he was doing, he seized Austin's shoulder and shook him with a grip that had won him some reputation as a college athlete.

Without warning, the thick leather strap that secured the botanist's mask broke from its fastening, and the mask slipped to the floor. Austin threw up his arms and clawed the air like a drowning man; then dashed wildly about, trampling upon the flowers and making strangling animal sounds.

Conrad snatched up the mask and tried to reach him. The poisoned atmosphere pressed heavily into his lungs, causing a black haze to fall before his eyes. He felt his knees weaken. Then, that he might have the strength to rescue Elaine and her father, he adjusted the mask to his own face. For a moment he swayed drunkenly, but the purified air sifting through the mask soon restored him.

WHEN his sight cleared, he saw the twitching form of Austin lying in a bed of broken flowers; while in the rock chair, with her head fallen against the hard arm, still and white as a rain-swept lily, sat Elaine.

A long gardener's tool lay near her. Conrad seized it and hacked at the glass around the hole he had made upon entering, until he had a large opening. He grew cold with dread as he lifted the girl's limp body into his arms and bore her into the clean air.

"Where is Father?" she gasped.

Conrad whispered soothingly to her and went back into the greenhouse. The convulsive movements

had ceased in Austin's body. Conrad picked him up and took him out of the reeking atmosphere. When he laid the still form upon the grass, Elaine staggered over to it.

"He is dead!" she sobbed frantically.

She swayed slightly over her father's body, but Conrad caught her before she could fall. For several minutes she clung to the young man, until her first grief was spent. At last he lifted the lace sleeve from the arm where the Thing had nursed and kissed the swelled circle. Her pale face, wet with tears that shone in the moonlight, seemed to grow happier.

"Alan," she whispered, "put on your mask and pick that lily for me. I want to see it die." Her voice trembled and she shuddered. "All my life I have been giving my blood to it, while it developed slowly through cross-breedings. It's half lily, half animal, now. And, Alan" —her voice was weary—"if father had lived, some day the offspring of that monster might have been a horrible caricature of—man! Now pick it for me!"

Conrad leaped into the greenhouse with open knife. The lily seemed to have gained in beauty since it had been glutted; the shining leaves reflected the light gloriously; over its pallid face, fifteen inches in diameter, lay a pinkish flush that had not been there before.

It might have been Conrad's fevered imagination, but as the knife severed the bloom he thought he heard a low moan, as from a creature in mortal agony. A drop of red liquid fell from the cut end of the stalk, and he nearly threw the flower from him in disgust.

And he never could tell why—even years later, when he explained for the hundredth time to his wife that her father's monstrous plan had been only a mad, impossible dream—why, in spite of his earnest efforts to preserve the great, fleshy bloom, it had turned into a putrid mass of decomposition, too loathsome to be placed among his collection of rare specimens.

Haunted Pearls

THE famous Von Maltzan pearls have once more lived up to the tradition that they could foretell the death of a member of the family to which they belong. Shortly after the recent death in an airplane smash of Baron Ago von Maltzan, German Ambassador to the United States, the jewelry box containing them was opened, and it was found that they had turned a deep yellow. The last time this was known to have happened was in 1892, on the death of the baron's grandfather.

Legend has it that it was in the year 1588 that the pearls were presented by a goblin to Baroness Eva Regna von Maltzan, because of a kindness she had shown him. At that time she was told that the pearls would bring good luck as long as they remained in the family, and would have the power, by turning yellow, to predict the death of any of the members.

"Ride for the Paloma crossin'," he said hoarsely.

Two Bits Mex

By LUPE LOYA

For thirteen years Joe brooded over the untimely death of his father, and the bitter days that followed for his mother. And in all that time his determination to avenge himself on his father's slayer did not waver. He came back to his home town and told of his intentions—with a result which he had not anticipated.

"I KNOW too much, kid. That's why I got to get out," were the words Joe Carston always associated with the bent Mexican coin. He remembered as though it were yesterday "Windy" Le Blanc, the lawyer of sorts who had been his father's counsel, sitting on the edge of the kitchen table, telling his weeping mother and the group of sympathetic neighbors about the shooting. The fact that most of the talk had been directed to the nine-year-old boy had filled him at the time with a sense of sorrowful importance, as though he had already shouldered the burden of the fatherless family.

"Yes, I warned yore dad from the first," the droning voice had gone on. "'If he don't get you one way, he will another,' I told him. 'Yo're guilty of havin' tried to get yore just rights out o' Barker, an' that's a crime in his eyes,' I says. 'He's used to bullyin' anybody he has dealin's with, an' he'll never forget that you went to law about

that mine deal. He done you out of yore half interest all right, because you didn't have nothin' down in black and white. But that wasn't enough. You caught him in his crookedness an' made him the talk o' the county, an' he'll make you pay for it.'"

Then he had slipped into Joe's grimy little fist the Mexican two-bit piece which had deflected Barker's second bullet; but not before he had held the twisted coin in his own palm for a moment, examining it quizzically with his curious, shifting green eyes.

"He'd have got me, too, if it hadn't been for this," he said grimly. "He'd have ruther got me than him, if he couldn't get us both. Keep it for good luck, kid, an' don't forget that Barker shot down yore daddy in cold blood. I'm leavin' 'cause I got to now, but I ain't forgettin' none."

NOR had Joe forgotten in the long, hard years that followed. His mother, abandoning any further claim in the mine which her husband had discovered and which Barker had financed with such disastrous results, had taken her brood back to Colorado, where, with Joe's help, she had managed to eke out a living on the small ranch which had been her girlhood home.

But Joe had not stayed to share the meed of prosperity which had rewarded their efforts. He had important business back in Texas. Just how he was to be revenged he did not know—it was too soon to think about that—but he meant some day to have it out with Barker; to demand payment in full for that framed-up shooting affray in the Sabino Hotel, when a half-dozen six-shooters had got into a spitting argument over a cattle deal, and only one, Barker's, had taken toll of human life. That the victim had "happened" to be an innocent bystander, the father of a family, had been regarded as just another unfortunate accident. Barker was too powerful, anyway, to be held strictly to account. But some old timers recalled the event when the victim's son, twenty-two years old, six feet tall, lithe and muscular and clean-limbed as the thoroughbred horse he rode, returned to Sabino and quietly went to work on the Ironwood ranch.

LINK MASON, foreman of the Ironwood, had taken a fancy to the boy. So had Mason's daughter, Julie. Perhaps if it had not been for Julie, young Carston wouldn't have talked so much those first few months he was on the ranch. But they made him one of the family, especially Julie, and those long winter evenings around the open fire in the big, adobe kitchen were conducive to confidences.

Mason meant no harm to the boy when he repeated some of this talk to the crowd that gathered around the sociable bar of the old Sabino Hotel of a Saturday night; but he too had a long-time grudge against Barker, and one drink of corn whiskey was sufficient to set his tongue wagging. It tickled him to aver loudly that the notorious "boss" of the county was about to be held to answer for some of his transgressions, and that a stripling youth was to be the instrument of vengeance.

"Joe's got the goods on him," he would say, when the conviviality was at its height. "You mark my words, Barker's goin' to get his one o' these days, an' Joe's goin' to know a lot about it when the time

comes. You mark my words!"

If young Carston knew that he was being pretty thoroughly discussed at these ranchers' gatherings, it did not trouble him. In fact, nothing mattered much lately except Julie. To the pair of them, drifting out on the golden sea of first love, the everyday world was very remote. Joe had not guessed that life could be so glamorous, so invested with wonder and delight; and to Julie, who seemed to have awakened from a dream of dull realities into a fairyland of romance, it was as though the prayers of her lonely little heart had at last been answered.

Motherless from early childhood, the girl had grown up in an environment strangely compounded of severity and leniency. She had the freedom of the ranch, of all outdoors for that matter, except the small part of it occupied by the town of Sabino. By her father's mandate, town, with its occasional dances and "socials," was taboo for her, and she had few friends and none of the meagre pleasures which the frontier hamlet provided. Sometimes she had been very unhappy. But that was before Joe came.

"No man gets my daughter until he makes good," Link Mason pronounced obdurately when it was borne in upon him that Joe and Julie loved each other. At first he was a little jealous—and surprised, too, for he hadn't realized that Julie was no longer a child; but in the end he capitulated, and now all that remained was for Joe to make good.

THEY were talking of the future on a certain Saturday night in late spring. The soft air, laden with the fragrance of the flowering chaparral, blew in at open doors and windows, bringing with it to Joe memories of a night long ago when he had sat with his mother's hand in his in the rough board shack at the straggling edge of Sabino. That day his father had been buried, and he could never dissociate the mingled odor of mesquit and ironwood and sage from the memory of that hour with his mother, sweet and sad and pungent with tears.

He told Julie about it as they sat in the gloaming, and from the pocket of his coat, where he always carried it, he brought forth the bent *dos reales* and gave it to her.

"It brought me all the luck I ever want to have when it brought me you, Julie!" he whispered, and the bit of silver slipped to the floor and was forgotten as he took her in his arms. Much later they sat on the step in the moonlight, waiting for Mason to come home, and Julie grew a little nervous as the hours passed and her father did not come.

"I wonder what's keeping him," the girl had just said when the sound of pounding hoofs in the road beyond woke the quiet night.

"He's ridin' hell-for-leather," said Joe uncomfortably. He hated it when Mason came home from town in his cups, sometimes garrulous, sometimes morose and hard on Julie. But whoever was coming up the road was not riding like a drunken man.

THE foaming horse dashed up to the house, and Mason flung himself off and seized Joe by the shoulder.

"Barker!" he gasped. "Found him murdered—knifed! You gotta go, kid—in a hurry. They're after you, that bunch o' Barker's from up country! Don't ask no questions—git! Fill a canteen, Julie, an' for God's sake hurry!"

Mason was already half way to the corral, and a moment later was back with Joe's horse. The boy was sure Mason was drunk now and had followed Julie into the house. Her father, running in at the back door, flung himself between them. Joe saw then that he was sober, and that his face, white and drawn, bespoke terror and anxiety. He pushed the boy toward the door.

"They're out to hang you, kid," he said, "an' it was my fool talk done it! I can't explain now. Here, take this canteen. Your horse is fresh—it'll get you to the river. Barker's vigilantes, all drunk an' thirstin' fer blood. Don't stop! Ride like the devil! Don't let 'em get you, kid!"

Joe knew too much about the gang of cut-throats known as "Barker's vigilantes" to care to waste time in vain argument as to why they wanted him. Clearly they were hot on his trail, and he was sufficiently schooled in the methods of quick "justice" which prevailed in the neighborhood to prefer to explain from a safe distance that he was not their man. Mason's remark, "It was my fool talk done it," meant nothing to him at the moment; but the man's terror-stricken face was proof enough that the danger was real.

"They think I knifed Barker, eh?" Joe breathed, as he swung himself on the horse.

Julie had run back into the house, but now, as he put his face down to hers, she thrust something into his hand.

"Your good-luck piece!" she sobbed, and clung to him until Mason roughly pulled her away.

"Ride for the Paloma crossin'," he said hoarsely, and turned his haggard eyes toward the outer road. "You got an hour's start of 'em, an' a fresh horse. *Don't let 'em get you, kid!*"

JOE eased up a bit as the morning sun rose high in the empty silence. Far to the rear there was a gray haze behind which his eyes could not penetrate, but he knew that somewhere over the route he had traveled a small whirlwind of dust pushed relentlessly toward him, enveloping a score of grim riders.

All around him lay a vast monotony of mesquit-studded sand hills, stretching like a petrified sea beneath a sky burnt to a strange pallor, and he moved among them like a phantom, steering his course by the saw-tooth Diablo range. He must reach the river and be well below the border before nightfall, or his life would not be worth the single coin in his pocket. Bitterly he wondered if it were worth two bits Mex, anyway.

Barker was dead—and he had not killed the man; hadn't carried out one move of his planned revenge. Yet it would be just his luck to pay the price of somebody else's vengeance. An ironic smile creased his dust-caked face as he thought back on the high resolve that had brought him to Sabino, only to sink into the soft embrace of romance, and lose himself in the golden meshes of a girl's fair hair. He knew now what Mason meant when he referred to his "fool talk." He could imagine how his boss had exaggerated his own foolhardy threats to "get" Barker, one way or another. He might have known better, should have known better, than to confide in Mason. But he hadn't known at first that Mason drank.

Well, there was nothing for it now but to keep going. To flee as

he had was practically an admission of guilt, or would be so interpreted by Barker's avengers. The so-called "vigilantes," in ghastly mockery of the once honorable order which had silently and impartially ministered justice to the unregenerate border country, were not a gang likely to listen to him, any more than they had listened to a certain sheep-herder who had been accused of horse-theft and whose body had been found swinging to a cottonwood in the hills above Barker's place. Later the real thief had been discovered, and had been dealt with summarily, but that hadn't helped the sheep-herder. There were numerous other instances too. Joe recalled them in grisly order as he had got them by hearsay, extending back through the years to the night when his father had been shot down—by "accident."

With a shock he recalled now that Barker had at last "got his." Again his face twisted in an ironic smile.

"Seems like Fate had a hand in this," he said, and then added softly: "Dad, somebody done him in, an' I don't mind payin' the price. It'll be worth it!"

BUT then he thought of Julie, and turned once more in the saddle for an anxious look behind. It was hot, blisteringly hot, now that noon approached. Somewhere up in the Panhandle a sandstorm was brewing, destined later in the day to smother everything in its path under a stifling blanket; but now nothing disturbed the immense silence. A buzzard hanging high above the earth, grimly, patiently, waiting for something to die, was the only living thing visible.

As in a drugged dream, Joe pushed on through the turgid afternoon. Occasionally he allowed himself a sip of water, fighting back thoughts of thirst that rose tantalizingly as the blue of distant mirage lakes flashed in his eyes. The want of sleep tortured him, and he woke from fitful dozes in a cold sweat of fear lest his weary horse had taken advantage of his lapse to turn back on the trail. Strange fancies obsessed him as his heavy gaze swept painfully into the blazing furnace ahead. Twice he thought he saw another rider, flitting ghostlike over the sand waves —a single rider, though, and far in the lead, so it didn't matter whether the man were flesh and blood or merely a figment of fancy.

A BREEZE, fitful at first but growing stronger, roused him from his lethargy. He had noted that tawny-gray cloud gradually blotting out the northern horizon, and now he sat up with a jerk and turned for a long look. It was a storm, a humdinger of a storm, and already it must be making trouble for the posse in his wake. As yet there was no sand in the air, here where he wove through the dunes, the country lying strangely hushed, as though fearful of the demoniacal forces about to be let loose; but he knew it was coming and braced himself for the shock of it.

And when it came it was in wrath that justified the terror of inanimate nature. That slight, teasing breeze, caressing with hot fingers the trembling surface of the dunes, was whining now—whining and tearing at the earth with barbed claws, kicking up the sand in choking clouds. The horse trembled as the bold gusts flayed his lean flanks. He too knew that this was but a forerunner of the terror

to come, and his limbs seemed to shrink into themselves as he crouched before the onslaught.

It was upon them now, like a beast pouncing on its prey. Long, sustained blasts beating the shuddering mesquit down and sucking the breath of man and horse as they struggled through its lacerating curtain. Joe lay flat on the horse's neck, protecting his face as best he could while the smothering squalls swirled around him and the helpless animal floundered and stumbled forward until by chance it came to a stop where two high dunes formed a little valley which offered some slight respite.

Joe was desert-bred and knew sandstorms, but this was the worst of its kind he had ever experienced. How long the two high dunes gave them shelter he did not know, but presently the horse was moving again, and at infrequent intervals the cloud lifted long enough for him to get his bearings. Aided by an unusually keen sense of direction, he was able to keep headed south; but there was small comfort now in the thought that his pursuers had been thrown off his trail—if they had—for he had probably missed by many miles the ford which had been his objective, and would find himself in strange or dangerous country when the storm ceased.

IT passed as it had come. The lulls between blasts were now longer, until finally the wind died out in short, gasping sobs like an attack of hysteria spending itself. Pushing on, half-dazed, the boy gave a sudden croaking cry of relief as a flash of mirrored light far ahead told him he had at last reached the Rio Grande. The red setting sun cast along its sullen length a sinister, bloody glow. Significant and prophetic it seemed, as he cautiously scanned the countryside for signs of habitation. The big cottonwoods along the Texas side looked unnaturally green against the receding sand cloud.

Where there were trees there were usually *rancherias*. But here there was nothing save a dilapidated 'dobe and the remains of a corral at the edge of the stream. The place had evidently been hastily deserted during the last high water. Some of the outbuildings, overwhelmed by the flood, had melted into rounded, brown heaps of mud.

The horse, lifting its weary head, sniffed hungrily as a breath of humid air fanned its parched nostrils. Joe let it drink its fill, took off the saddle, and turned it into what remained of the corral. He had no idea where he was with respect to the Paloma crossing he had been heading for, but there must be a ford somewhere at hand, he was sure, and after a short rest he would look for it. But he must rest a while.

In a rack back of the house he found a bundle of mildewed hay, which the horse attacked ravenously. Then, having cared for his beast the best he could, he stumbled into the house. It consisted of one room, with a dirt floor and a low, thatched ceiling. An ancient table, blackened with smoke and grime, and a few battered chairs and boxes, made up the furnishings.

There was a pot of molding *frijoles* in the ashes of a long-extinct fire, and near by a little dried heap of *tortillas* left just where the startled housewife had plucked them from the bake-stone. They were hard and brittle, but Joe nibbled at their thin edges and

washed them down with the water that remained in his canteen. He was too tired to eat, anyway, and his mouth and nose were full of sand. Suddenly, with a little sigh, he collapsed onto the floor.

NERVOUS exhaustion and muscular fatigue were working in him like a drug. Sprawled there on the hard dirt floor, he sank into unconsciousness. It was the sort of profound, dreamless sleep from which one awakens as though born into the world anew; and when, some hours later, he opened his eyes, he could not for the life of him figure out where he was. To add to his bewilderment, he found he could not move his arms, and for what seemed a long time he lay there, puzzling over this strange fact, his mind still groping helplessly in the shadowy borderland of sleep.

Then he woke up fully, the events of the day before coming back in a series of startling, vivid pictures. He was still on the floor of the 'dobe hut, but a rope had been slipped over his shoulders, pinioning his arms. Everything was clear to him now except this rope.

It had been just dusk when he had flung himself down to rest. Now the first light of dawn streaked the sky, but on the rickety table in the middle of the room a smoking oil lamp burned fitfully. Who had lighted it? In a panic Joe struggled to an upright position, and stared into the wavering shadows. He saw, in the small arc of light cast by the lamp, the face of a grizzly-bearded man.

"I reckon I got ye," the man said quietly, as their eyes met. "You was pretty game to foller me through the storm. Where you made yore mistake was in figgerin' I'd crossed the river. I would have, an' been miles south o' here by now—on'y, I needed yore gun."

Joe saw now that his own belt and holster lay on the table. The stranger fingered the butt of the revolver as he talked.

"I lost mine—an' it ain't healthy to be without one in this climate, especially when they's a mob o' vigilantes out takin' the air." He laughed dryly.

THE boy's first thought was that the posse had overtaken him. Now he didn't know what to think. Had he stumbled, perhaps, on the lair of some lone border rustler? He tried to move, to ease his cramped position, and the man, noting his efforts, came over to him and, pulling him upright, propped him against the wall. There was a chair nearby, and he sprawled into it, grinning. It was plain that the situation appealed to his sense of humor.

"I'm kinda glad it woke you up when I put that rope on ye," he said. "I ain't in no special hurry now that we got things sorta settled this-a-way. Funny how it worked out, ain't it? When I first discovered you follerin' me, I shore thought the jig was up—I thought the rest o' them must be right behind ye. Then the storm come, an' I was tickled to death thinkin' I'd dodged ye fer good. But when it cleared, there you was, still on my trail. I was watchin' you from that clump o' bushes down by the river when you put yore horse up an' come in here. I kinda counted on ye doin' jest that. An' here you are where you cain't do no damage—an' I got yore gun, which I need more'n I need my immortal soul!"

Again he laughed unpleasantly, and Joe felt a slight shiver wriggle

up his spine. It was cold in the hut with the chill of approaching dawn. Already a lozenge of gray against the intense shadow of the wall marked the location of the open door.

"I'd take yore horse, on'y it's wuss off than what I'm ridin'," the curiously dry, dispassionate voice went on. "An' since you've been so good as to lend me yore gun, I'm goin' to loosen that rope a bit before I leave, so's you can work it loose in an hour or so. You ain't a bad sort o' kid, even if you do run with a herd o' low-down vigilantes. This here's the Calabasas crossin' miles from where yore friends is probably headin' for, if they're still travelin'. But you'll . . . What's that?"

HE leaped to his feet as a stealthy footstep sounded just outside the door; reached for his hip, and, remembering too late that the gun was on the table, made a stumbling lunge for it and knocked it and the lamp to the floor.

"Hands up!"

Against the gray backdrop of the open door loomed the shaggy figure of a man, and as the little pool of oil on the dirt floor flared into flame, Joe saw that it was Pete Molino, a ruffianly half-breed of Sabino, sometimes known as "Mexican Pete," and leader of the gang Barker had deputized to keep the county cleared of "undesirables." There were others behind him—five of them.

"Who the hell are you?" was Molino's barking question as his surprised gaze took in the bearded stranger; but before the man could answer he had caught sight of the boy trussed up on the floor—the boy for whom they were looking.

"I reckoned he might be a fugitive, so I tied him up," said the stranger quickly. "Found him asleep here on the floor, an' kinda had a hunch he was wanted fer somethin'. Horse-stealin' maybe, eh?"

"Worse'n that," growled Pete.

"Murder," one of the others explained briefly, and offered the stranger a drink.

"Well, ain't that the luck!" said the bearded man. "I'm from down the valley a-piece. My place is the Seven Up. Stopped here on my way to El Paso, tuckered out after the storm, an' found this here kid asleep on the floor."

The increasing light revealed him as fairly well-dressed. He looked the part of a prosperous elderly rancher, and as such was accepted by the remnant of the posse, whose concern at the moment was not for strangers or their business, but for Joe Carston, who had been thus fortuitously delivered into their hands. They had been drinking. Now they drank some more. One of them even offered Joe a drink as he sat, gray-faced and silent, against the wall.

"If you want to see a purty little necktie party, stick around," invited Molino thickly. There was a note of deference in his voice. The Seven Up was a big ranch.

THE stranger had quietly picked up Joe's gun. Now he strapped it on and made a move toward the door. But Molino stood in the way.

"That yore hoss outside?" he inquired, his beady eyes traveling from the doorway to the stranger's face. "Looks like you been leatherin' him some."

"Tried to beat the storm. Say! Ain't you fellers goin' to take this kid back an' try him? He ain't nothin' but a kid."

It seemed to Joe that the man was anxious to keep off the subject of horses.

But his voice had a note of pity in it, too. The boy had said nothing up to this time. He decided to keep silent a while longer.

"Try him?" growled Pete. "What fer? We know all we want to know." He seized Joe by the collar and dragged him to his feet. "One o' you fellers search him," he commanded. "Not that we ain't got all the evidence we want, but it's customary. They's a nice big cottonwood down by the river that's goin' to save the county the price o' a trial in about five minutes."

THROUGH the doorway Joe caught a glimpse of distant mountains rosy with the promise of sunlight, and to his nostrils came the haunting breath of chaparral on the dawn breeze. Two of the men were running their hands over his person, and from the pockets of his coat they extracted a letter from his mother, a note-book with some entries of pay-checks and expenditures—and the Mexican *dos reales* which he had fatuously regarded as lucky.

Magruder, one of the searchers, put the note-book and coin on the table and, moving over to the light of the doorway, began rather sheepishly to read the letter. It began "Dear Son," and went on to say that the mother was glad he liked his new job and had met such a nice girl. "If you love her, I'll love her too, Joe."

The boy's face flamed with anger as Magruder mouthed the words, then settled into a white mask of anguish as the reader stumbled through the sacred missive. It was such a letter as a mother writes to a son perhaps only once in a lifetime; the letter in which she relinquishes the first claim to his affection in favor of the girl he has chosen to be his wife; a tender little letter with joy and pathos strangely mixed, and meant only for the eyes of her boy—the once "little boy" who has become a man.

Even Magruder's crude reading of it could not crush the spirit and sentiment that had crept into the room like the fragrance of sweet lavender, pathetically, eerily, out of place in that grim setting. The others glanced uneasily at one another, embarrassed because they were touched; annoyed with Magruder and themselves for having stumbled upon a bit of "evidence" so overwhelmingly in favor of their soon-to-be victim. It was an immense relief when the stranger broke the uncomfortable silence.

"WHO is this kid?" he demanded, and there was a strained, cracked note in his voice. He was holding the bent *dos reales* in his palm.

They told him. They were glad to burst into garrulous talk, explaining in detail how the kid had boasted he would "get" a man named Barker—a big man from up country; how Barker had been found at the door of his lonely ranch house knifed through the heart; how everything pointed to the kid as the murderer . . . he'd done a lot o' talkin' . . . only one in the district who had actually made threats . . . an' Barker had accidentally killed his dad a long while ago.

"Funny thing!" interrupted the stranger. "A feller come by my place jest the other day that knew Barker. Made him out a pretty bad character, tho'—in fact, seemed kinda excited about it. Now you

mention it, I recall he said something about a shootin', but he seemed to think it was done a-purpose. Kinda hinted that Barker had tried to get him, too. Said he an' Barker had been in some rustlin' deals together previous to this shootin', an' that Barker had owed him money which he swore he'd never pay. But the feller talked like he meant to settle with him one way or another. Said he'd been waitin' his chance fer thirteen years."

"He did, eh? What sort o' a lookin' feller was he?" somebody asked.

"Little, darkish, smooth-shaven man. Had a funny name, too. Le's see. Seems like his name was—wait a minute—Le Blanc, that was it! Le Blanc."

"Le Blanc? Windy Le Blanc?" Molino was staring at the stranger, groggy-eyed.

"I remember him!" Magruder put in excitedly. "Him an' Barker was as thick as a nest o' rattlers fer a while."

"An' then took to hatin' each other like p'isen," said another. "But he ain't been in this country fer years."

"It was less'n a week ago he was at my place," the stranger insisted. "I didn't think nothin' about it at the time, exceptin', as I say, the man seemed sort o' excited. But don't it look like he might know somethin' about this here killin'? Anyways, I wouldn't be too hasty if I was you about stringin' this kid up. Tell you what I'll do. Le's take the kid back to Sabino an' look into the thing, anyways. Havin' handed him over to you this-a-way, I feel kinda responsible fer him; an' I'm a man that likes to see justice done. If he's innocent, I'll back him with my last dollar; if he ain't —why, it'll be time enough then fer the law to take its course. Le's get somethin' to eat an' talk it over. I've got a side o' bacon on my saddle that ought to go good. Wait till I get it an' put my horse up."

THEY were very weary, those vigilantes, and somewhat stunned by the turn events had taken. Their feelings were at that tipsy stage where a single word can shift the balance from blood-lust to lachrymose sentimentalism. The stranger's argument had impressed them favorably, and for the moment thoughts of food and rest were pleasanter than the prospect of choking a boy to death at the end of a rope.

As the stranger stepped toward the door, he tossed the coin to Joe.

"Here's yore lucky *dos reales*, kid," he said. "You may need it yet."

Somebody laughed, and Molino himself graciously loosened the rope around Joe's arms.

"I guess we can let him use his arms to eat with, hey?" he demanded loudly, and the others, already investigating the dust-encrusted cupboard that stood in a corner of the room, acquiesced with grunts of approval. A whoop of joy went up when one of them discovered an old coffee-mill half full of beans.

"Say, with this an' the boss's bacon, we can have a feed!" yelled Magruder, reaching for the blackened, greasy coffee-pot. "The flour's full o' weevils, but they go down all right in sinkers. Hey, boss, hurry up with that there side-meat!"

Molino, who happened to be nearest the door, looked out. The rancher was nowhere in sight, but his dust-encrusted horse still stood

with reins dragging. The half-breed passed a grimy fist over his bleared eyes and took another look—this time at the bunch of tired ponies nibbling at a clump of fresh grass, where his men had dropped off them at daylight. Then he emitted a grunting oath and sprang for the door. For now only five ponies grazed where before there had been six, and the missing one was Molino's.

The others came pellmell after him, Magruder still waving the coffee-pot.

"Where's that guy at?" he demanded belligerently of the landscape at large, but his voice had an hysterical upward note that reflected the sudden panic that had fallen on them all.

MOLINO said nothing, but strode to the stranger's horse. Joe, rubbing his chafed arms, gazed around him dazedly. A folded envelope stuck upright in a cleft of the pommel. It was the envelope that had held his mother's letter. On the back of it was a penciled scrawl.

> I knifed Barker when he held out on me. He got my gun but I knifed him. The kid had nothin to do with it. Sorry to take your horse but Barker's went lame.
>
> LE BLANC.

"*Madre de Dios!*" squealed Molino. "He give us the slip!"

Magruder was rubbing dried sweat off the horse's flank. The brand thus exposed was Barker's. He thought he recognized the saddle, too, which opinion was confirmed on examination of the elaborately-carved initials on the cantle. Then they turned bloodshot eyes to the river and the empty, desolate waste of sand hills, gilded by the morning sun, which lay on the Mexican side—the safe side.

Suddenly Molino emitted an explosive burst of laughter, followed by a string of remarks in border patois which might be liberally translated to mean: "Well, if that wouldn't beat the blankety-blank cock-eyed Dutch!"

Magruder shifted the coffee-pot to his left hand and scratched his head.

"He's half way to nowhere by this time—an' even if you want to chase him over the line, I'm gonna eat first."

The others grunted assent, but looked to their leader for confirmation. He, still grinning, pushed a grimy paw through his shock of greasy hair.

"That was a good hoss he got!" he growled, but again the grim humor of the situation overcame him and his big shoulders shook with laughter.

"Barker wasn't no special fav'rite o' mine," ventured Magruder, holding the coffee-pot up to the light to make sure it had no holes in it.

"Me neither," suddenly decided Molino. "Let's eat. Are you hungry, kid?"

Something suspiciously like tears twinkled on the boy's eyelashes as the erstwhile necktie party one by one solemnly shook hands with him. He blinked to keep back the show of unmanly emotion that threatened to overwhelm him.

"I shore am!" he said, in a voice with a funny squeak in the middle of it. "I shore am!"

And as they trailed back to the hut to a baconless breakfast, he carefully buttoned his lucky *dos reales* into the pocket of his woolen shirt.

His aim with that unwieldy bucket was surely the finest in France that morning.

The Spy Master

A Series *

By RICHARD WILMER ROWAN

III. A House of Deep Design

While two great bodies of men clash in an interminable struggle within hearing distance, and while the unique army of taxis rolls bravely to the front, Von Karl, vivid and startling as ever, plays hide and seek with the beautiful Diane and the young American in a most surprising manner.

I

THAT reckless and intrepid man, the great Spy Master, Conrad von Karl, had disappeared again. But this caused neither bewilderment nor dismay at the headquarters of the counter-espionage service in Paris. When Diane Duplessis and I reported upon it, after our midnight dash from Du Parc's château to Arras and Amiens, we were not charged with negligence. Our integrity remained unquestioned.

Every one knew Von Karl, and knew his habit of introducing drama and irony into all his endeavors, great or small. Moreover, my friend, Paul Marin, and his chief, Bertrand, confidently expected the Spy Master

*The first of this series appeared in the November issue. Back numbers will be sent anywhere in the United States on receipt of twenty-five cents each.

to continue in some contact with the German secret service while taking the pay of France. He was a self-seeking professional in Europe's game of blood and plot and patriotism. He would scheme always to attach himself to the winning side. And while this first war threat of invasion and disaster made his French alliance an uncertain choice, he would surely contrive to balance upon several fences.

Yet though he had vanished, and with what purpose we could not venture a guess, his more recent exploits remained in the record, my own most vivid recollections. What a formidable and bizarre figure he had been throughout our adventures at the château! I could see him as each brief act of that drama unfolded—the fine figure superlatively arrayed, the dark countenance with its commanding nose and chin, and eyes as black and fathomless as his deadliest escapade. And that strange, coiling scar upon his left cheek—veritable trade-mark of tortuous practices and sinister projects! Some said a jealous woman wearing a costly ring had inflicted that peculiar mutilation; while there were many to testify that Von Karl cherished its uncommon distinction and used the arts of make-up to keep the unhealthy pallor and menacing curl of it upon his cheek.

BUT no cosmetics had aided the scar's livid manifestation when, at the château which was General von Bülow's headquarters, the Spy Master had slain Von Stein, a major of the general's staff. I could see him in that grim moment as in many others, charging over dilemma and peril with the magnificence of heavy cavalry. The Ganz woman had tried to betray us, and he had punished her with death. Then with infinite resource had he secured us the Mors staff car, with its insignia which had been partly our passport.

And then, when not a thousand metres from Manoury's outposts, he had silently deserted us and the borrowed Mors, like the stage magician he delighted to appear.

IT WAS on the 31st of August, 1914, that Marin, my friend, but now also my superior officer, conducted Diane Duplessis and me to report to Bertrand in person. My left arm I carried in a sling, for the wound inflicted by the Ganz woman was swollen and painful. To my surprise, we were not taken into the Ministry of War, or to any other public edifice. Instead, Bertrand received us in the parlor of a suite at a small hotel in the *rue de Vaugirard*.

Though I had been in active service for several months, this was only my third meeting with the chief, of whom it was said that he never went off duty, but even dreamed of counter-espionage and thus devised many new projects for the defense and safeguarding of the Republic. Short and wiry, he had the traditional figure of the cavalryman. With gray hair and crisp mustache, he seemed pale and worn, but his eyes were keen and blue. Forty-five, and lately promoted to be a lieutenant-colonel, he was called a genius by the very few permitted to observe his career. Official recognition of his services and consequent public acclaim would have impaired the value of those services, which fact was a tragedy—to him and to all France.

Since he brought to his great work the intensity of the enthusiast, there was that about Bertrand which made his commendation precious and even his censure inspiring. He dealt

in destinies and in matters much more secretive, and prized above fame the courage and discretion of us, his subordinates.

Not a Conrad von Karl, but a match for the Spy Master, and rather a man of mystery, too, this Jerome Bertrand. He mystified friends and colleagues on the score of thrift, since he made it no secret that he lived alone and comfortably on half his army pay. His dark blue uniform coat with the staff insignia was well worn. Matching it on a littered table, his cap with the scarlet crown showed gold braid aging and tarnished.

But the pale face, the shrewd eyes that did not record loss of sleep, warmed with a flashing smile when we entered. His official bearing was as easy and worn as his coat.

"We shall have to suspend judgment, after all," said he, motioning for us to seat ourselves. "Conrad von Karl intends to be heard in his own behalf."

"He has turned up?" Marin exclaimed.

"In this form only—twenty minutes ago." And Bertrand offered us a square of light blue tissue-paper.

To me it presented only a jargon of syllables, meaningless in French or any other language. But Paul Marin and Diane were surprisingly impressed.

"The old Foreign Office code!"

"Precisely," Bertrand resumed. "He couldn't resist showing off that he knew it. It was stolen from poor Legendre last February, when he was stabbed to death at Monte Carlo. The thief took it aboard the *Achilles*, the yacht of Gregor Marcolos, who, it now appears, miraculously escaped when the yacht was sunk. And Von Karl obtained it—for this mere useless display, since he would be well aware it had been changed since then."

"And what does this message have to say?" I ventured to inquire.

Bertrand smiled. "That he is hurrying here to report to me."

"As though he were the most disciplined of your agents!" Marin observed. "His insolence approaches mania."

"He cannot know of our presence here," said Diane.

"I dare say even this place is not hidden from him," Bertrand replied. "Let us wait patiently a while."

II

FOR a quarter of an hour we talked of the war and our special duties in the city of Paris.

A sharp, rapping sound disturbed us.

"That closet door—" Marin began.

Bertrand himself crossed swiftly to the door and flung it open. Von Karl, in a dark blue cloak with a hood, stood nonchalantly waiting to enter.

"Colonel, my hearty congratulations," said the Spy Master at once, referring to Bertrand's recent promotion. "Forgive me, won't you, for making use of your private entrance?"

He walked in lightly, shutting the door behind him and passing Bertrand with a profound bow. He next nodded pleasantly to Paul Marin, and then offered Diane and me his most cordial felicitations.

"So you brought our dummy general through the lines without mishap? And you, my dear, allow me to declare that you drove the German car with the utmost skill and spirit," he told Diane.

His great dark eyes were agleam with a mocking light, as though he saw again our discomfited adversaries at Von Bülow's headquarters

in the north. The slight muscular twitching often seen above his right eye was growing perceptible; and, as usual, it seemed to signal us some impulse in the crafty brain behind it.

When Von Karl put back the hood of his cloak, I noticed that his face was pale. Beneath the hood he wore a close-fitting leather cap, extending to cover neck and ears, and fastening smoothly under the chin—the kind of thing motor-racing drivers had already worn into favor and which airmen would presently take for their own. Von Karl's was of a rich, dark green, and somehow suggested to me the old-time forest outlaw of romantic legend.

He slipped his cloak off with a graceful twirl, and now I saw his left arm in a black silk sling, similar to the one I wore. Yet in spite of his injury he was immaculately dressed. That wondrous emerald usually adorning the turban he affected was now suspended by a narrow ribbon around his neck, much as though it were a priceless decoration he had conferred upon himself for stealth or valor. But also today he had the ribbons of a Russian and of a Turkish order to share display on the lapel of his dark gray morning-coat.

WITHOUT invitation, he seated himself, slightly smoothing his striped trousers, as though he were at his ease in a fashionable drawing-room. If it were his intention to report to Bertrand, the leisurely manner of beginning it was but one more arrogant pose.

"My friends"—he addressed Diane and me—"about my leaving you and the Mors as I did—after that last German patrol had finished popping away at us, there were so many bullet holes in the tonneau, I felt myself in a constant draft——"

"You were hit?" Diane questioned. "Why didn't you tell us?"

"It was nothing—merely a rifle ball through the fleshy part of my shoulder," he explained. "I lost rather a lot of blood, but the weakness that induced is passing."

"Where did you have your wound dressed?" Diane questioned bluntly, knowing him to be one upon whom adroit interrogation was wasted.

"I had planned all along to desert you two," said he, ignoring her question. "Our flight from Du Parc's hectic home was necessary. But that necessity rather disconcerted me. That ultimate disturbance at the château which the Ganz woman started was, of course, not within my own premeditation. And I could not report back here to Paris without bringing intelligence worthier of my reputation."

BERTRAND at last interrupted our chat. "Am I to assume, then, that you have brought such intelligence," he said, "and that it may even be urgent?"

Von Karl affected to ignore any sarcasm in this inquiry.

"Urgent, to be sure. I am coming to it at once," he returned. "Do you know the full extent of the Russian defeat at Tannenberg?"

Bertrand hesitated, and I thought he would not answer. But then he said: "We know what each side in the engagement wishes to make us believe. It was a grave disaster, as I understand—from the 26th to the 29th."

"A disaster, yes. You had my earlier report that the Russians could not win in East Prussia," said the Spy Master. "Those Russian army commanders, Samsonov and Rennenkampf, have been bitter rivals. They would never really coöperate in the field. I knew that.

Only a Russian staff would assign them troops advancing side by side. And be assured, the Russian Minister of War is not merely a plunderer—he is a traitor. You French might spare yourselves something by understanding an allied deficiency.

"But this Tannenberg victory does more than check an invasion or destroy a hundred of the Czar's best battalions. It is going to make a reputation. Von Hindenburg is going to become the idol of his men. And that, as a German asset if the war is prolonged and loses its first popularity, as wars always do, will be worth far more than any one triumph in battle.

"Poor Moltke," he pursued, "is a hopeless incompetent. With his headquarters 'way back there in Luxembourg, his army commanders are taking a free hand. Indeed, they have to.

"And now, let me tell you this: there are two German corps in Belgium. While Antwerp holds out they must stay there. Maubeuge is at present besieged by a corps and a half. The President of East Prussia rushed to Berlin, imploring relief from the oncoming Cossacks. East Prussia was the ancient seat of the German monarchy, and Moltke is sentimental, like most of his race, so he has withdrawn two corps from the west to send them to the eastern front. And these corps he has actually taken from his right flank. The *right* flank!" he repeated. "From Von Kluck and Bülow and the Saxon, Hausen. And that your General Joffre will want to know."

"Yes," Bertrand agreed.

I did not see his gesture, but Marin understood and immediately went from the room.

"I obtained an airplane—no matter how—and flew from Belfort to tell you," Von Karl went on.

BERTRAND, who had obviously welcomed the confidential news of a major blunder by the enemy, now coolly consulted a report which he took from his pocket.

"From Belfort? In the air?" said he. "That is not the precise truth."

Von Karl laughed—but not with that ringing mirth I had heard Diane at times provoke in him.

"You are somewhat better served than I imagined, Colonel," he said. "But no matter—let it pass."

"That, I am afraid, is scarcely possible," was Bertrand's moderate response.

However, it inflamed Von Karl. He advanced a menacing step. His tone, when he spoke again, was as chillingly sharp as an icicle.

"In spite of my wound, I remained behind the German lines. I crossed in the rear of every army, from Von Kluck on the extreme right to Heeringen's Seventh Army in Lorraine. An impossible journey, you think? But not for me! And I am here with all possible haste to communicate this vital intelligence."

"I appreciate—" Bertrand began.

"Oh, do you?" snapped the Spy Master. "And is that my reward? Suspicion, appreciation—and then, I doubt not, incarceration!"

Resenting his arrogant bearing, Bertrand got to his feet. But Von Karl looked taller and heavier than ever, and their difference in height spread a sneering smile across his dark countenance. The twitching above the eye resumed its satiric beat.

"Well?" he demanded.

"Your accomplishments will be justly measured and rewarded," said Bertrand. "You have an arrangement with us, monsieur, and you are

expected to submit to some degree of discipline. Any commerce with our enemies is forbidden. There is, for example, a man traveling with you as your valet. He is known to us as Bissing, a German agent."

Von Karl's surprise was invisible. "I know that also," said he. "But I have grown weary of conducting my own court martial." He smiled at Diane and me impudently. "I was in a hurry, and I led this fellow into his present trap. You may execute him whenever convenient."

"That shall be attended to," Bertrand replied.

"One would think your armies were victorious—you have so much time for trifles," the Spy Master said. He chuckled grimly. "Why worry about spies in Paris, since your government is fleeing to Bordeaux?" Bertrand's eye glowed, but he endured the thrust. "You must simply learn not to hamper me by trying to understand my methods," Von Karl pursued. "Agreements mean nothing. I intend serving that side which grants me the facilities I require. If you arrest me, Colonel, fourteen of your agents in Germany will be denounced at once by my representative in Bern. Forgive such insurance."

"And had the Germans taken you, how many of their agents could your Bern representative have denounced to us?"

"A score." He could not resist the boast.

Bertrand was on the admission in a flash.

"I shall expect your report on those German spies within our lines," said he. "Twenty, you say?"

"I am an extraordinary man, but at the moment a very fatigued one," Von Karl proclaimed. With a sweeping gesture he donned his maroon cloak. "You know my hotel. When I have slept and breakfasted you may call upon me. The invaders are yet some miles from Paris. And we can negotiate all my further activities."

He kissed Diane's hand, gripped mine for a hearty moment, saluted, and turned on his heel. And the dark red garment he wore seemed a very flag of defiance as he crossed the room and disappeared.

III

DIANE and I, by invitation, lunched with Conrad von Karl at his hotel on the morrow. That Bertrand was keeping him under surveillance, we knew. He knew it also, and discussed it with sinister relish.

"It may be that I shall vanish again, my friends," he said. "On come the Kaiser's armies. I have no mind to stay in Paris during a siege. In '71 the Prussians had no 42-centimeter guns. It will not be so pleasant — and my nerves," he jested, "are a principal asset in case of bankruptcy. I must safeguard them." He added that his former rival in the espionage market, the Levantine, Gregor Marcolos, had counted upon spying for the Germans in Paris during a siege, and had even had a house prepared to that end.

It was said that Von Karl had a physician in to dress his shoulder wound directly after Diane and I left him. My own wounded arm was in the care of a major of the garrison hospital corps. When Von Karl's doctor departed, the Spy Master desired to dress and go out, and sent word of this, summoning the hotel valet. Bissing had been arrested, but there had not been sufficient proof to convict him before a court martial, so he had been interned. The hotel management, lacking younger men, despatched an

elderly Swiss to attend Von Karl. But even this Swiss was in Marin's employ.

He ascended to the third floor as rapidly as he could, for Von Karl's gratuities were celebrated among all who had ever served him—whatever their connection with the counter-espionage service. The man came and knocked on the Spy Master's door, and the voice of Von Karl bade him enter.

The elderly Swiss opened the door and walked in, but saw nothing of Von Karl. He spoke respectfully, announcing his presence. And Von Karl's voice, a bit muffled now, answered, telling him to come into the bedroom.

But the Swiss never reached the bedroom, for, as he approached its door, another—the door of a closet—popped open. One powerful hand and arm, since Von Karl had only one, stretched out and seized the astonished Swiss by the throat. His cry of amazement was choked to an anguished sob. Von Karl came out of the closet where he had lurked and by that same maneuver twitched the helpless old Swiss back into its depths.

Von Karl shut the closet door smartly and locked it—and more, he bolted it, having thoughtfully attached a small steel bolt where none was provided by the hotel management. Scrambling to his feet in the closet, the Swiss tipped over a little bottle of chloroform, as the Spy Master had meant that he should. When the Swiss revived enough to make a commotion, so that help was brought to him and the closet door unfastened, he had been shut up for nearly an hour.

CONRAD VON KARL and all his more interesting effects had vanished, of course. Not anywhere in the hotel, not anywhere in all Paris, was there to be found a trace of this man whose very appearance and manner combined the whole art of conspicuous display.

"He must be found," came the order from headquarters. "He is a dangerous ally and a deadly foe. He must not be let to run at large behind our lines. He must not escape to an enemy or neutral state. He must be shown that we excel even him in craft, and can use him or shut him up in a fortress as we see fit."

This was all very fine, and Marin confessed to me that Bertrand laughed at it. However, Bertrand agreed that Conrad von Karl deserved a lesson in fair dealing. He had been engaged to spy for France, and no expense had been spared to win his flimsy allegiance. Diane and I—agents needed elsewhere on our own—had been detached to run his errands and provide him trustworthy companionship. And for this coöperation he returned melodramatic spectacles, and this during one of the most critical fortnights in the history of France.

"But we'll pick up his trail again," said Marin, "when we locate that house."

What house? He hastened to explain that two weeks before there had come through word from the British regarding a house in Paris associated with German espionage activities.

While Diane and I had stuck to Von Karl at the château north of Guise, intensive search for this house had been started. And now, on September 1st, she and I were ordered to join in the curious combing of Paris. Sergeant André Benoit, one of Marin's best men, accepted our aid, though technically both of us outranked him in the service. It

was also our privilege to join forces with the clever Carruthers of the British Secret Intelligence Corps, who, an art critic before the war and as acquainted as a Frenchman with Paris, was now on duty there and likewise concerned with the uncovering of that mysterious dwelling.

THE value of any spy increases in proportion to his nearness to armed activities. September, 1914, found the capital of France very much in arms, and preparing for the shock of the foe. Like a loose hinge beside the impregnable wall of Belfort-Toul-Epinal-Verdun, Joffre's left flank swung back before the gray invaders.

"If the city is invested," said Marin, "every spy here is a stab in the back. And the house may possibly be used for signaling to their balloons and planes."

Diane was reminded of Conrad von Karl's statement, that Marcolos had even had a house prepared for him in case of such a siege operation.

"Marcolos," said I, "specialized in the East, but hoped to overthrow Von Karl and be active in the West, too. We are really seeking the fat Levantine's house."

Carruthers observed that the British information depicted the dwelling as one that always had foreign tenants. The invasion had emptied Paris of its foreign residents—even those of many years' standing had hunted up the unfamiliar consulates and started south, to Bordeaux, with the disquieted government, to the Riviera, or to Spain. In short, we must find an *empty* house, more accessible to plotters—perhaps they would count upon that—but also easier to investigate in our hurry.

Benoit and I begged for more men, as the available lists of places occupied by foreigners were extensive.

"Old men and boys can be spared," said Marin.

Diane and Carruthers joined us in voting for boys. A dozen alert gamins were straightway recruited. And we got them bicycles on a government requisition. For all the time wasted, the absurdity of clues, the foolish inspirations and speculative wanderings, progress in this odd search had been made. Paris might lie stricken within the month, but it remained a great city. And we could say with conviction, unless Conrad von Karl were managing it magically, that the dwelling of German intent must be one of fourteen suspects.

Carruthers, Benoit, Diane, and I became a sort of flying squadron. Each of the fourteen houses had a boy to watch it or was near enough to a gendarme's post to be under direct police supervision. We had a surplus of three boys, who acted as relief or for messenger service. The reasons for suspicion in the case of the fourteen formed a vast body of proof and opinion which it now seems incredible that Marin or Benoit could ever have digested.

No wonder I smile when I hear that the German is methodical and thorough!

EVEN Carruthers had it all by heart, and he and Benoit were separately disposed to back different candidates for the ultimate treasonable demonstration. The British agent, for example, favored a certain house on the Boulevard Berthier, with its ugly roof and the six "architectural" chimneys protruding therefrom.

This place was lately inhabited by an American family. The father—Charles Henderson—had made his fortune in plumbing and heating

supplies. He had a considerable family, including three daughters, none of whom approved the residence he had been persuaded to rent. Carruthers had met one of the Misses Henderson, a pretty and talented girl, and had afterward set foot in her Parisian home. Old Henderson, said he, seemed a fearful crank. Nothing French suited him; yet he had a lease and elected to remain for a year, chiefly on the art-student daughter's account. So much for what was mere hunch!

But the engaging Carruthers pointed out to us other semi-substanial aspects of evil affecting his candidate. The house was recorded as being owned by a person resident in Zurich, who, it appeared, never openly visited his Paris investment. And his agents—a reputable French firm—confessed they had his instructions never to hold out for a high rental or exact any hard terms. "Keep it tenanted," seemed this owner's motto.

Moreover, he had but once interfered in their management, appointing as a kind of caretaker an innocuous-looking cripple, not native to Paris, who might readily be in foreign pay. And with this misshapen pensioner the Hendersons had not failed to disagree. So that several months before the fateful August of 1914 he had been liberally paid and invited to go away and stay till their lease expired.

It had not yet expired, of course, on August 6th, upon which the day the crusty Henderson decided to remove himself, the three daughters and all other family impedimenta to sunny Spain. The crippled caretaker might now have resumed his duties. But it was learned that, in the initial round-up of all aliens deemed undesirably at large within the fortified city of Paris, this cripple was among those sequestered.

Had a familiar green turban belonging to the missing Spy Master been discovered nailed to the door of the house, Carruthers could not have been more certain of its pernicious destiny.

ON SEPTEMBER 2d a siege of Paris seemed clearly indicated. The left wing of Joffre's curvilineal defense was showing signs of rout. Lanrezac's Fifth Army was beaten at Guise—the gallant handful of battered British regulars beaten at Le Cateau! In the midst of obstinate, fateful retreat thousands were perishing, being wounded, being taken prisoner; and towns and homes, fortunes and small, pitiful savings, all were being swept away. But Diane and Benoit, Carruthers and I—we hunted the house of some spy's purpose within the French capital.

Carruthers privately had engaged more boys, trying to take those whose fathers were in danger at the front, or whose families the war already had left in want. Each received a soldier's pay. We obtained more bicycles. And all of them we worked hard, night and day, in pairs or groups of three.

September 4th. Uhlans now in Senlis! Von Kluck almost on the Seine, recklessly pushing his vanguard. Von Bülow and the Saxon, Hausen—scapegoat elect—spreading their armies apart to close up the gaps that he made!

September 5th. Fire department companies in a Paris suburb burying slain Prussian lancers. September 5th, and Foch at the marshes of St. Gond; Manoury north of Meaux! The two as yet uncelebrated lions at bay, preparing their mighty counterstroke devised by Papa Joffre.

Into Paris itself the titanic action had spread. And here there were only a few of us hunting spies, hunting the strange house of deep design—Diane and I likewise hoping to trace by way of that domicile the dangerously missing Von Karl. Then there was old Gallieni, the resolute, with his unwearied garrison regiments—fifty thousand men to be maneuvered in a hurry, to be moved across an anguished countryside, like a cloud of locusts to sweep overland and arrive there beside Manoury's colonial veterans in the attack north of the Marne!

"Taxi!"

Not many among all those yet remaining in the greatly threatened city saw and understood resolute old Gallieni's strategic commandeering of taxicabs. It was not like war. But it was modern, it was resourceful and immensely fantastic and inspiring.

Paul Marin allowed Diane and Benoit and Carruthers and me to witness the preparations of that masterly, ironic thrust. Indeed, we were out there officially, and for the time being forgot sinister dwelling places. We estimated several hundred active spies in Paris as yet undetected. It seemed very likely that at least one of them would be the driver of a motor cab.

And such nondescript cabs there were, getting ready for their famous forced "march," loading with six, eight, even ten young soldiers, swinging into a ragged, snorting, puffing line—an army in reserve rolling to the attack on wheels. Smart staff cars like non-commissioned officers sped about upon the job of marshaling groups of battered mechanical *poilus*.

We gave our chief attention to the drivers of the taxicabs, many of whom were already in uniform, themselves recently mobilized, but held for this special duty. And as, hour after hour, the four of us watched the crowded taxis form in companies and battalions and take the road northward, there were others as observant. These others, too, had been trained to gather the merest bits of military intelligence, and they could apprehend all the merit in it, all the generalship in a suddenly swift and overwhelming assault upon Von Kluck's flank, shattering the German First Army and the whole vast invasion of France.

We sought them on the spot and failed to detect any alien observer. Would we fail to find the house of the spies? Carruthers insisted that it was a straight tip. The British, said he, had a number of agents exceptionally well posted behind the enemy lines. One of these—as we learned only at the close of the war—had become attached as a major to the personal staff of Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria. It was from some such inside source that had come the warning via London and Whitehall about the house on a Parisian boulevard.

WE PLANNED and argued and worried. We waited for morning, when the last of the taxi army had gone its way, but none of us tried to sleep, merely resting as best we could in Carruthers' motor car, and eating our breakfast in it, also. André Benoit was in uniform to spare us from continual police interrogations. It was just sunrise when we breakfasted, stopping in the *rue Fontaine*, before a small café whose proprietress hailed Carruthers as a prodigal returning.

Already were our youthful scouts, watchers, and message-bearers stirring about and on the alert.

"See there!" cried Diane.

"What news, lad?"

A soiled little chap, one Etienne Moreau, had come madly wheeling around the corner on a bicycle. Gasping, he hailed us, his dark eyes glistening with zeal.

Sole comfort now of a mother widowed since the Trouée de Charmes battle on the 24th, Etienne brought us momentous news. But so rapid was his report in French and so slangy, I besought Diane or Benoit to translate it.

"He says that two women have sneaked into the house. They appear to be setting the place on fire," said Marin's crack sergeant.

"My house, too, old top!" Carruthers exclaimed. "What did I tell you?" It seemed that he knew every urchin in our command by the house he was engaged to cover.

Our British ally was starting his car even as Benoit and I lifted boy and bicycle into it.

"Stand up if you can," I suggested to Benoit. "Then we'll be recognized as hurrying on army business."

He did. And we raced for the Boulevard Berthier.

IV

NEAR the former abode of the Hendersons we stopped our motor and leaped out to complete the approach on foot. Signs of a fire were conspicuously absent. Yet we hastened forward, and a second boy breathlessly added himself to our number. This one was Felix, and proudly he explained the procedure of himself and little Etienne in the service of their country.

Because the two women had entered so furtively a short while after dawn, they had at once closed in.

"We surrounded the house, *messieurs*," said they in chorus, as if describing the action of a regiment.

When they had crept close to the very door of the house they smelled smoke. It seemed that there was fire down in the cellar. Etienne had then set forth on his wheel to spread the alarm to us.

Marin's authority allowed us keys to all the suspected buildings. But even before we made our way into this one, an acrid odor of wood smoke began to reach us, confirming the boys' report.

"It is down in the cellar," said Benoit.

Carruthers, by virtue of his pre-war experience in calling upon the pretty Miss Henderson, went boldly exploring on the first floor after we had entered.

I directed the gamins to stand guard on the outside. They might be sent to summon firemen or gendarmes, or both. But they were not to move, I said, till one of us ordered it.

"We obey, captain," said Felix, in the English he was striving to master.

Opening and closing the door had created a draft, so that the wood smoke was more than an odor as we ventured down cellar in single file. I attempted to dissuade Diane from this part of the enterprise. She had practically saved me when Von Karl sank the *Achilles*, and her light derision reminded me of that gallant conduct.

Smoke we found pouring forth from what, in all previous tours of inspection, we had dismissed as a capacious but arid wine closet.

"LISTEN!" Carruthers exclaimed. We had groped our way to the closet, and now we heard unmistakable sounds of the other intruders, coughing and choking. Whether spies or common incen-

diaries, the two women were audibly suffering, and not far off.

In the rear of the stifling pseudo-closet there was a second door, hitherto concealed behind a false wooden partition. And most cunningly concealed it must have been, for we had been priding ourselves on the almost vandal thoroughness of our manner of inspection.

"Shall we go on?" I queried. "Or shout a threat to fire, unless they surrender and come out?"

Benoit and Carruthers seemed to think we ought to press on, without disclosing ourselves, at least until we had a glimpse of whatever the two were attempting.

So on hands and knees, nearly blinded and as near to strangling, we crawled beyond the secret door, and reached suddenly a narrow flight of stone steps. These apparently led down to a sub-cellar.

I had compelled Diane to stay a little way back. Fire there assuredly was down there. And we found it an agonizing effort to keep from making some sound that would give an alarm. Fire crackling—and thick smoke! Yet I reasoned that a sub-cellar, walled in stone and roofed with cement, had slight chance of spreading its blaze save by the very passage that we blocked.

A nauseating dizziness acutely assailed me. I had kept my head close to the floor, but such smoke as this . . .

It was Diane and Carruthers who pulled Benoit and me clear of the smoke-filled wine closet. They whispered advice which our experience supported. That closet was a passage less agreeable than a chimney to wait in; and it seemed certain one or more of us must be knocked out if we persisted in posting ourselves so. Benoit found a bucket and went to fill it with water from a tap on the floor above. Then we soaked our handkerchiefs and adjusted them as dripping masks over eyes and mouth.

Diane consented to remain at the closet entrance to maintain open communication with the urchins outside.

"Now we'll rush 'em," said Carruthers.

We groped our way once more to the secret door and the stairs to the burning sub-cellar.

BUT now figures loomed before us in the smoky passage. One of the intruding women was dragging her suffering partner to safety.

We three pounced upon them, but also assisted in their rescue. Then Benoit plunged on with his bucket to attempt to check the blaze.

Diane bent curiously over our gasping, breath-tortured captives. However close to being overcome, neither of the oddly employed women collapsed or fainted. And each was presently sitting up on the cellar floor where we had laid them, and each staring about her as though more the victim of accident than design.

"Madame?" Rodney Carruthers courteously offered his flask to the nearest of them, forgetting the thirst which must have tormented his own aching throat even as it did mine.

With no word she accepted it and drank deeply. Then, with an urgent little gesture, she passed the flask to the other. And this one also drank the cognac without a murmur of polite relief.

The smoke seemed thinning. Carruthers reached out to take back his largely diminished stimulant. And that crouching vixen — astonishingly revived — struck him a

heavy blow on the temple with the metal flask.

As Diane and I exclaimed, Carruthers lurched and fell to his knees. I moved to aid him quickly. But even more quickly his assailant had drawn a revolver.

Here, I saw, was no case of "Hands up!" The woman's red-rimmed eyes flashed murderously.

She meant to shoot me and Diane also, as soon as her less aggressive companion could scramble to her feet. Carruthers, crumpled pitifully in the clouded cellar, was shaking his head, trying to clear it, wanting to join me in the fray. But it seemed very unlikely that I should participate myself.

I was armed, but dared not move a finger, time being the only valuable consideration in a bargain as shrewd as this driven upon me, at such close range.

"Wait——" I began.

"Canaille!" She spat it out hoarsely. And the voice was a man's! No wonder poor Carruthers was down for the count!

Certainly a German spy in crude disguise.

"Von Karl?" I ventured. The missing Spy Master was taller, heavier, and of finer bearing, but this might be one of his men.

"Marcolos!" the masquerader snarled, and I knew my sorry mistake. For this was an agent of Von Karl's arch-adversary come to the house prepared by the fat mongrel of the Levant!

BUT now André Benoit, carrying an emptied bucket, issued from the wine-closet passage. His perception of our dire plight was blessedly instantaneous. And his aim with that unwieldy bucket was surely the finest in France that morning, even though French gunners elsewhere were winning immortal glory.

Also was it the quickness of his attack which added surprise and saved my life. The hurtling bucket struck the arm of my foe, and his pistol exploded terrifically within the narrow precincts of the cellar. Its bullet fanned my cheek. Then Benoit's own gun leaped from its holster, even as I drew mine.

Despite his manifest handicap in the feminine outer garments, the fellow showed fight, moving his weapon awkwardly, his battered arm quivering, but trying to threaten us both.

"Boche!" shrilled Benoit, whose brother was dead at Laon.

The stranger fired wildly, and we let him have it, Diane also firing the small automatic she carried in a chamois holster strapped under her blouse.

The volley stretched him dead upon the chill cellar floor. Powder smoke drifted around us. But the other, with a woman's voice, besought our mercy.

We gave Carruthers some of the remainder of his brandy. I refilled the noble bucket, and we bathed his face and head. Diane tended to a deep gash on his temple. We helped him upstairs, and escorted our living prisoner. When three gendarmes appeared we were just debating what to do with the victim who lay in a broken heap below.

Hearing shots, our boys had found us reinforcements without being told. In a few words Benoit and Diane convinced the police of our authority.

"Paris is now under martial law," said I. "But if we can only prove a case of arson——"

"Arson?" Benoit exclaimed. "Come and see."

Leaving our prisoner under close

guard, we followed him down into the still smoky sub-cellar. He showed us there a small iron stove and a stack of green wood. From the stove led off six flues, each controlled by an ordinary damper. Now the house boasted six chimneys; and obviously, then, these flues had somewhere a secret connection with them. Such fuel would produce plenty of smoke.

And by using the convenient dampers it could be distributed, now to that, to the next, to another—being expelled from one or several or all, in a thoroughly readable code!

"This was the house intended for siege all right," triumphed Carruthers.

"Yes," Benoit agreed. "The Imperial German staff has always planned on a late summer campaign, with a fall and winter siege following. If Paris held out and winter came, wood smoke from chimneys would look natural enough—yet it would be seen by balloon observers or a scouting airplane."

"And this pair came to signal about the taxicab army," Diane guessed. "They chanced it that some German scout might pick up their warning, and pass it on to Von Kluck or Bülow."

Carruthers began laughing so heartily, we three suspected the force of the blow he had sustained.

"No doubt the taxi army will help Joffre win, even if it should be expected," said he, explaining to me. "But your compatriot, Henderson, still deserves a medal about these chimneys. I told you he was a trusty chap, who'd made his money in steam-heating installations. How he hated fireplaces—said they created drafts when not in use and smelled up the place. Soon after he discharged the caretaker, who must have been the real agent intended to use the secret stove, Henderson had every chimney but one blocked off.

"Regardless of the owner or the expense, he said he planned to spend next winter here and was going to introduce an American heating plant. He would show these Paris people what a real home can be like in the worst weather! And," he concluded, "being interned, the cripple caretaker was unable to ascertain the blocked conditions of the six precious flues. Hence much smoke, but no chimney signals."

"Conrad von Karl," I reminded them, "had heard all about this house. But he gave no hint of any signaling apparatus. Perhaps the woman upstairs could tell us how we may locate him. If she can be made to talk——"

"She'll talk," Benoit and Diane assured me. "You had better leave it all to us," Diane added.

When they led the woman to a room apart on the first floor, Carruthers and I waited outside the house, answering the questions of boys and gendarmes, one of whom said he had sent for an ambulance to remove the body of the spy we had slain.

V

BENOIT and Diane achieved the desired vocal effect with expert promptitude. And I do not think they had to employ any physical cruelties.

In the excitement of the cellar *mêlée* I had forgotten my injured arm. It was throbbing again; and Carruthers admitted a fiercely beating headache. Yet neither of us would have consented to retire as a casualty.

The woman spy, her face now veiled, wept softly. Diane became the driver in place of Carruthers. I

sat in front beside her, with the little Etienne held between my knees. The boys deserved some recognition, and further adventure was the most they asked. Felix rode in the back with Benoit and the British secret agent, who had the melting prisoner safely between them.

We made haste, for it was still early and the traffic light. On the Marne a battle fatefully advanced to its crisis. Impact of heavy gunfire was an incessant murmur in our ears. Bülow and Hausen, with three hundred thousand men, were coming upon the French center—upon Foch with seventy thousand. And Foch, with his large view of that extensive action, at Mondement, at La Fere Champenoise, was attacking them!

Benoit left the veiled woman at Marin's headquarters, where presumably she would tell yet other things to the counter-espionage service before her trial.

"And now another house, my friend!" Diane exclaimed. *"Rue Fontaine——"*

We stopped but a short way from the café where we four had breakfasted. The boys agreed to watch over the car.

Yes, the elderly *concierge* agreed, there was a large and swarthy man who had a room there, on the top floor. Benoit showed our credentials. We trooped up the five flights of creaking, steep stairs. My arm ached too severely to prepare for battle with a Conrad von Karl. But Benoit and Diane had pistols ready. When we pushed open the door, the room was empty.

It was hard to imagine an exquisite like the Spy Master even entering here. The small rear room was shabby and could have been much cleaner. No article, no garment, remotely associating itself with the man we knew, could be found. Yet the woman spy had said that the agents of Marcolos' gang in Paris had spied upon Conrad von Karl, assuming him to be a chief agent of the French.

She had not seemed reluctant to give the address, once they had persuaded her to talk. A second interview with the *concierge* added enough to the description, so that we were convinced her lodger was Von Karl. Therefore we waited, Carruthers going down and moving away his motor car, so that it might give no warning of visitors.

The two boys tarried diligently below; but to us it was a dreary business. By turns Carruthers and I went to visit a physician, and Benoit and Diane telephoned our reports. But three of us were always there, shut in the small room, waiting, on guard, alert — waiting——

IT WAS mid-afternoon when a heavy, labored tread upon the stairs warned us once more to be alert. Diane was out, 'phoning and buying food and wine. Benoit, Carruthers, and I lurked behind the door. Our British colleague had his head bandaged, and my arm was now bound tightly across my chest. Benoit held two revolvers to offset our injured state. The newcomer tramped wearily upward, sighed as he reached the top. We heard him shuffling toward our door.

It opened. Benoit's pistols aimed imperatively.

But we had not caught Von Karl!

"Messieurs!" the intruder gasped.

His fear was a veritable palsy. His jaw sagged and his eyes rolled in a vague and groping despair.

"Oh, *messieurs!*"

An elderly wreck of a man was this intruder, his face a grimy

waste of apprehension, his clothing and hands soiled. He wore a miscellaneous outfit of abandoned garments, and over all a stained, absurd linen duster and a tattered cap.

"Who are you?" we snapped.

"Jean Perolle, *messieurs* — taxicab chauffeur," he hastened to identify himself.

So! While Benoit kept the fellow covered, we examined his eagerly proffered papers and found them all in order. The detailed description of him met our visual impressions, though no grime had been officially registered upon his person in the past.

Stoop-shouldered and haggard, Perolle coughed a little and protested much. Young André Benoit's uniform seemed to engage him. Once, said he, even poor Jean Perolle had been a fine, upstanding man. He wept a little for the memory's sake. And then he told us over and over again, the name of the regiment of *chasseurs* in which he himself had been trained, years ago, directly after the other German war.

And, *messieurs*, that not so distant cannonade? Did we expect the *Boches* soon to be in Paris?

His agitation grew and grew, while we sought to confine him to an account of his errand here with Von Karl.

Von Karl? A German? No, no, Carletti, he corrected us. Of course he knew that elegant gentleman—an Italian, he thought. But very rich, and always also very, very generous!

"Always, eh? And how long have you known him?"

"Since but yesterday afternoon, *messieurs*." And Perolle added that M. Carletti was as strange as he was lavish, keeping this dingy room for himself, but not sleeping here or remaining long.

INVITED, he gave us without effort a colorful and exact description of Conrad von Karl—now Carletti—even to the peculiar scar and the twitching above one eyebrow. He seemed to relish talking about his prodigal acquaintance and would have repeated the portrait, adding gestures, if we had not stopped him.

And why had he come now to see Carletti, the rich?

Because, *messieurs*, this spendthrift Italian oddity had done one other queer thing, having rented from him, Jean Perolle, his taxicab, meaning to drive it himself.

"When?"

"In the afternoon of yesterday."

"As a personal favor to General Gallieni," Carruthers remarked.

But Jean Perolle only gaped at the Englishman, seeming not to comprehend a jest in that tongue.

Carletti, he went on when permitted, had paid him a good two hundred francs in gold for himself. And had deposited with him fifteen hundred francs more, in case of some damage to the machine. How like Von Karl, that guarantee against German or French shellfire!

Yes, said Perolle to our next inquiry, he still had all this money, except ten francs privately disbursed. And from the depths of his extraordinary apparel he began dredging bank-notes and coins, till we saw the total—sixteen hundred and ninety francs. Only the driver, he owned a mere fifth of his cab, he related. He gave us the names of two relatives who controlled a majority interest of four-fifths, and also supplied us with their addresses.

To him it had seemed only a miraculous stroke, since the German invasion made taxi profits small. While the two hundred

francs for himself was a Heaven-sent fortune!

But now—yes, he had come here, as M. Carletti had said he should, to recover his motor vehicle. And where, pray, was the rich, if eccentric, Carletti?

We regretfully informed him that Carletti's return was not at all probable.

A criminal, *messieurs?*

Worse!

Then had he done a wicked thing, contrary to the martial law, in renting for the one day his venerable taxicab?

Though he had Von Karl's money, he remained inconsolable. How could he know this Italian rogue was opposed to the best interests of *la patrie?* Would he, Jean Perolle, formerly a soldier of the Republic, have accepted a bribe to aid any man who plotted against France? Tears streaked the grimy countenance. And on the topic of his patriotism, though gesturing floridly, he surprised us with a homily of simple, moving eloquence.

WHEN Diane returned to us we had all but forgotten Conrad von Karl, while we endeavored to convince the poor fellow that we believed him utterly innocent. And seeing her, he rose from the bed and bowed very gallantly, this derelict of Paris. Truly it seemed that her radiant intrusion cheered and dazzled him. He no longer wept nor exclaimed. He stared and fidgeted and appeared much less at ease in his woe.

Of course, we now believed that Conrad von Karl would never be taken in our convenient trap. Benoit had ceased to handle his revolvers. Perolle was urged to sit again upon the shabby bed; and Diane even offered him some of the wine she had brought us, so that again he was almost moved to tears.

I watched Diane fill a tumbler with claret. But then I was surprised to see her dip her handkerchief into the wine. Turning quickly, the tumbler in hand, she smeared the dampened handkerchief across Perolle's grimy cheek.

And I saw the coiling, ugly scar there. And, being shown, I now even could discern a twitching muscle above the right eye of the alleged taxi chauffeur!

"The scar—do you see?" cried Diane.

Von Karl himself completed his identification, for he leaped to his feet and catapulted Diane and the glass of wine against Benoit, whose weapons made him the most to be feared. As he turned, I clutched at him, but the Spy Master with desperate agility wheeled and darted from the little bedroom, slamming shut its door as he sped.

It latched, but we dragged it open and all of us were charging out directly. Yet Von Karl had contrived to leave an old chair in our way, cunningly and swiftly placed. So that, as his heavy boots thundered down the steep stairs, we were spilling over one another in a harmful heap. Poor Carruthers badly hurt his head again. Benoit sprained his ankle. But he kept on in pursuit, limping and shouting.

"No use that way now! In here!" Diane exclaimed, scrambling up. She led and I followed, into a larger front lodging which was unoccupied.

"We can fire at him when he comes out into the street," said she.

She drew her revolver. I had mine, but only one hand free and no record of marksmanship likely to merit this critical test. However, we flung up the windows and leaned far out, making ready to shoot him—or, at the least, to at-

tract the attention of the gendarmes to our target.

Below, by the doorway, our faithful gamins waited. If we yelled down to them, they might try to tackle the fleeing man. But it was not fair to pit their slight youth against the desperation of a Conrad von Karl. . . .

An hour afterward in this front room where we hung from the windows our search was to uncover the real Jean Perolle, minus most of his garments and his identification papers, trussed and gagged. But now——

THOUGH it was but a wait of moments, it seemed half an hour.

"There he comes!" cried Diane.

Each of us took careful aim directly downward.

Did he look up? Did he hurry? Not at all. He was almost leisurely, and he appeared in jovial mood.

Fondly he caught up a boy in each arm, and we had to hold our fire. Felix and little Etienne were gleeful. The three of them soon were laughing so happily, our shouts passed as unnoticed five stories below as did that distant, ceaseless rumble of cannon fire.

Von Karl, still the derelict, the grimy and tattered driver of a taxi which must have matched his appearance, now balanced a boy on each shoulder. With his wound it must have been a cruelly painful stratagem. But he did not falter, or look back, or look up. His pace was quickening. But what casual spectator would detect flight in this playful pose?

Neither Diane nor I dared to shoot. He knew it.

He was running with them now, and the two urchins roared their approval. What few bystanders observed the scene were also moved to mirth. No cries of ours on high could be interpreted as other than a kindred appreciation.

There we hung, armed and helpless. Von Karl passed out of revolver range. Benoit's ankle had rendered his descent of five flights a sorry chase, indeed. And now at the corner Von Karl was lowering his pair of jockeys to the street.

Of course they acclaimed him, this muscular, jolly old friend they had happened upon in a city that dreaded the siege. The guns had not slackened their rolling shock since dawn. On the Marne a battle was raging. Von Karl paused a moment, waving to the boys, and then to us, it seemed—and again he disappeared.

The February Novelette——

THE INITIATION DEATH

By R. D. KINGSLYN

The story of one of the most extraordinary cases that ever tested the deductive powers of that surprising lawyer-detective De Witt Wickford.

DON'T MISS IT IN THE FEBRUARY ISSUE OF

MYSTERY STORIES

HARRY HOUDINI

Original sketch by W. L. Thomas from a drawing; used by permission of Harper & Bros.

Houdini, the Enigma*

By SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

PART II

Did some unusual power enable that master showman, Harry Houdini, to perform his mystifying feats? In this article Sir Arthur Conan Doyle attempts to prove that Houdini really had such a power and that it was psychic. His conclusions will help those who accept Spiritualism to understand the oftentimes strange conduct of the famous medium-baiter, and those who find acceptance impossible will none the less find his arguments most interesting.

NOW, having considered Houdini's inexplicable powers, let us turn to his direct relations with Spiritualism. In public, as is notorious, he posed as its uncompromising foe. It is useless to pretend that it was only the fake medium that he was after. We are all out after that scoundrel, and ready to accept any honest help in our search for him. Houdini wrote in the *Christian Register* of July, 1925:

> Tell the people that all I am trying to do is to save them from being tricked in their grief and sorrows, and to persuade them to leave spiritualism alone and take up some genuine religion.

His attack was a general one upon the whole cult.

But this was not in the least his attitude in private. I suppose that there are few leaders of the movement, and few known mediums, who have not letters of his taking the tone that he was a sympathetic inquirer who needed but a little more to be convinced. His curious mentality caused him absolutely to ignore the experiences of any one else, but he seemed to be enormously impressed if anything from an outside source came in his own direction. On one occasion Houdini showed me a photograph which he had taken in California. "I believe it to be the only genuine spirit photograph ever taken!" he cried. To my mind, it was a very doubtful one, and one which no sane Spiritualist would have passed for a moment. But in any case, if his was, as he claimed, genuine, why should he put down all others as fraudulent? He had another which he showed me with some disgust, but which seemed to me to be capable of a real psychic explanation, however unlikely. The sensitive film had been torn lengthwise right down the plate, just as though it had come in contact with a sharp nail. He assured me that he had put it into the carrier quite intact. It might, of course, have been some singular accident, or it might conceivably have been a sign of some sort of disapproval, which was a possible explanation of the gravel-throwing in the music-hall of Boston.

* The first of these articles appeared in the December number, a copy of which will be sent anywhere in the United States on receipt of twenty-five cents.

HOUDINI'S experience with decent mediums was really exceedingly limited. He sat several times with Eva during the abortive investigation by the London Psychical Research Society. He wrote to me at the time, saying: "I found it highly interesting." There was no question of any exposure. I believe that he once—and only once—sat with that great voice medium, Mrs. Wriedt, on which occasion nothing at all occurred, as will happen at times with all honest mediums. There was certainly no talk of any exposure.

Speaking generally, it may be said that Houdini's practical experience, save with a class of people whom a decent Spiritualist would neither use nor recommend, was very limited. His theoretical knowledge of the subject was also limited, for, though he possessed an excellent library, it was when I inspected it neither catalogued nor arranged. His book, "A Magician Among the Spirits," is full of errors of fact.

In spite of this very limited basis he gave the public the impression that his knowledge was profound. To one reporter he said that he had attended ten thousand séances. I pointed out at the time that this would have meant one a day for thirty years. His accusations against Spiritualists were equally wild. A certain man committed a peculiarly atrocious murder at Clearwater, in Florida. Houdini broadcasted the fact that it was due to spirit teaching. Fortunately, a resolute Spiritualist, Mr. Elliott Hammond, went into the matter, and showed clearly that the murderer gave his complete disbelief in life after death as being at the root of his actions. Spiritualism would have saved him.

I REPEAT that Houdini's attitude in private was quite different from that which he had in public. At one time we had him really converted without the slightest intention of causing such a result. It was at Atlantic City, in 1922. He had spoken in a touching manner of his mother. My wife, who has the great gift of inspired writing—that is, of writing that which appears to be quite disconnected from her own mentality—tried to see if she could get any mesage for him. It was done at my suggestion, and I well remember that my wife needed much persuasion. We had no sooner assembled in our quiet sitting-room than the power came, and the medium began to write with breathless and extraordinary speed, covering sheet after sheet, which I tore off and threw across to Houdini at the other side of the table. We gathered that it was a moving and impassioned message to her son from the dead mother. He asked a mental question without speech, and the medium's hand instantly wrote what he admitted to be an answer. Houdini was deeply moved, and there is no question that at the time he entirely accepted it. When we met him two days later in New York he said to us: "I have been walking on air ever since."

I published the incident in my "American Adventure," so that he had to explain it away to fit it into his anti-spiritualistic campaign. The line of criticism which he took was that it could not have been from his mother since a cross had been put upon the top of the paper, and she was a Jewess. If he had cared to inquire, we could have shown him that the medium always puts a cross on the top of her paper, as being a holy symbol. We consider that such exercises are, in the highest degree,

religious. That is a complete answer to the objection. His second criticism was that the letter was in English. This was plausible, but shows an ignorance of psychic methods. If a medium were in complete trance, it might well be possible to get an unknown tongue through her. Such cases are not very rare. But when the medium is not in trance, but writing by inspiration, it is the flood of thought and of emotion which strikes her, and has to be translated by her into her own vocabulary as best she can. Thus, the second criticism falls to the ground. But in any case one would imagine that he would have had nothing but respect and gratitude for one who had tried to help him, with no conceivable advantage to herself. No sign of this appears. It is the same queer mental twist which caused him first to take the name of the great Frenchman, and then to write a whole book, "The Unmasking of Houdini", to prove that he had been a fraud.

BUT there was another very curious and suggestive incident in connection with that sitting at Atlantic City. As Houdini, much moved, rose from the table, he took up the pencil and bending to the paper he said: "I wonder if I could do anything at this!"

The pencil moved and he wrote one word. Then he looked up at me, and I was amazed, for I saw in his eyes that look, impossible to imitate, which comes to the medium who is under influence. The eyes look at you, and yet you feel that they are not focussed upon you.

I took up the paper. He had written upon it one word: "Powell." My friend, Ellis Powell, had just died in England, so the name had a meaning. "Why, Houdini!" I cried. "Saul is among the prophets. You are a medium."

Houdini had a poker face and gave nothing away, as a rule, but he seemed to me to be disconcerted by my remark. He muttered something about knowing a man called "Powell" down in Texas, though he failed to invent any reason why the name of that particular man should have come back at that particular moment. Then, gathering up the papers, he hurried from the room. It is probable that at that moment I had surprised the master secret of his life—a secret which even those who were nearest to him had never quite understood.

I HAVE said that the Houdini mentality was the most obscure that I have ever known. Consider this manifestation of it. My wife and I were, as I have shown, endeavoring to help him with no possible motive save to give him such consolation as we could, since he was always saying that he wished to get in touch with his mother. Such consolation has often been given to others. Even if we suppose, for argument's sake, that we were mistaken in our views, we were, as he often admitted, in dead earnest. Then, as we rose, he wrote down the name Powell, which meant much to me. If it was not written under psychic influence, why should he have written anything at all, since no one had asked him to do so? He saw the difficulty when he had to explain it away, so in his book he says that it was a "deliberate mystification" upon his part, and that he wrote it entirely of his own volition. Thus, by his own showing, while we were honest with him, he was playing what I will charitably describe as a practical joke upon us. Is it any wonder that we look

back at the incident with some bitterness? He does not attempt to explain how it was that out of all his friends the name that he wrote was the very one which might well have wished to come through to me. There is a limit to coincidence.

IT IS a curious fact that neither my wife nor I knew what was in the mother's letter until I read it in his book. It was written so swiftly that the medium could at best have only a very vague idea of its purport, while I never even glanced at it. Now that I read it, it seems to me to be a very beautiful letter, full of love and of longing. As I have explained, the thoughts are given to and are largely translated by the medium. Therefore, there are some sentences in which I can recognize my wife's style of expression, but the greater part of it is far more fervid—one might almost say more Oriental—than anything I have known my wife to do. Here is an extract:

> Oh, my darling, my darling, thank God at last I am through! I've tried—oh, so often! Now I am happy. Of course, I want to talk to my boy, my own beloved boy. . . . My only shadow has been that my beloved one has not known how often I have been with him all the while. . . . I want him only to know that—that—I have bridged the gulf. That is what I wanted—oh, so much! Now I can rest in peace.

It was a long and very moving message and bore every internal sign of being genuine. There is no question at all in my mind that Houdini was greatly shaken at the time and for some days afterward. His objections were all after-thoughts in order to save the situation.

LET us now follow a fresh line of thought. There can be no question at all to any one who has really weighed the facts that Ira Davenport was a true medium. Apart from the evidence of thousands of witnesses, it is self-evident that he could at any time, by announcing himself and his brother as conjurers, and doing his unique performances as tricks, have won fame and fortune. This would seem a dreadful thing to do from the point of view of a good Spiritualist, and the Davenports went to the last possible limit by leaving the source of their powers to the audience to determine. Houdini has endeavored to take advantage of this and to make out that Ira admitted in his old age that his feats were tricks. To clear away such an idea I append the following letter written by Ira in 1868 to the *Banner of Light*:

> It is singular that any individual, skeptic or Spiritualist, could believe such statements after fourteen years of the most bitter persecution, culminating in the riots of Liverpool, Huddersfield and Leeds, where our lives were placed in imminent peril by the fury of brutal mobs, our property destroyed, all because we would not renounce Spiritualism and declare ourselves jugglers when threatened by the mob and urged to do so. In conclusion, we denounce all such statements as base falsehoods.

We happen to be particularly well informed about the Davenports, for, apart from long statements from many well-known people who examined them, there are three books by people who knew them well, and who could not possibly have been deceived had they been swindlers. The smallest book, by Orrin Abbott, covers the early days, and the author tells how he was intimate with the brothers when they were little boys, and how at that time he had every opportunity to observe and test their wonderful powers. These seem, as is often the case with mediums, to have been stronger in childhood than in later life, the power of levitation being one which Abbott witnessed, but which is not

recorded of them elsewhere. The second and fullest is Doctor Nichol's biography, while the third and most valuable is found in the "Supramundane Facts" of the Rev. J. B. Ferguson. Ferguson was a man of very high character, with a notable record behind him, and he traveled with the Davenports during their tour in England. He was with them at all hours of the day and night, and he has left it on record that their experiences when in private were quite as wonderful as anything that the public ever saw.

It is notable that these well-attested feats included not only the instant freedom from ropes, however carefully fastened and sealed by the spectators, but also, on occasion, the freedom from handcuffs or twisted wire, and the power of opening locked doors. In a word, the Davenport powers were the Houdini powers, save that the latter had physical strength and agility which may have helped him to extend them.

MY ARGUMENT now begins to emerge. If it be true that the Davenports were real mediums (and let the inquirer really read their record before he denies it), and if Houdini produced exactly similar results which have in each case been inexplicable to their contemporaries, then is it conceivable that they were produced in entirely different ways? If Ira Davenport was a medium, then there is a strong *prima facie* case that Houdini was a medium.

I would not, in probing this difficult problem, pass too lightly over the considered words of the rabbi, that he had a wondrous power and did not himself understand it. This phrase fits very exactly into what has been stated to me by those who were nearest to him in life: "If it was so, he did not know it," they have answered when I hinted at my conclusions.

It seems hard to comprehend, and yet there may be something in this view. He was not a clear thinker, and he had no logical process in his mind. That surely is evident when in the same breath he denies all mediumship and yet claims to have discovered the greatest medium in America, or when he scoffs at spirit pictures but brings me a very indifferent one which he had taken himself. Imagine that such a man finds himself one minute inside a box, there is an interval of semi-trance during which his mind is filled with a vague feeling of confused effort, and then he finds himself outside the box. There is no obvious intervention of spirits, or of any outside force, but it just happens so. He has the same power in emerging from fetters, but he has no sort of philosophy by which he can explain such things. If we could imagine such a very strange and unlikely state of things as that, it would, at least, have the merit that it would give some sort of honest and rational explanation to a good deal which at present is dark. It is no unusual thing for a medium to fail to understand his own results, but it would certainly seem almost incredible that any one could have such results for many years and never correlate them with the experience of others. I, as his friend, would welcome such an explanation if it could be sustained, for it would clear him of certain shadows which linger in the mind.

BUT how does the good rabbi know that he did not understand it? Only one man could say with authority, but he has passed away with closed lips, leaving, however, many signs behind for those who care to follow them.

There is one thing certain—the fate of the Davenports must have been a perpetual warning to Houdini. They had been ruined and hunted off the stage because it was thought that their claim was psychic. If his powers were to be drawn from that similar fate, then his first and fun- source, and if he were to avoid a damental law must be that it be camouflaged in every possible way, and that no one at all should know his secret. If this be granted, a great many disconnected points become at once a connected whole. We see what he meant when he said that his own wife did not know how he produced his effects. We see, too, the meaning of his relations to the Davenports. We understand the voice of which he spoke. We comprehend dimly the unknown power of the rabbi. We can even imagine that a campaign against mediums, fortified by the knowledge that false mediums do exist, would be an excellent smoke-screen, though probably he had never thought out what view the unseen powers might take of such a transaction. I cannot say that all this is certain. I can only say that it covers the facts as I know them.

Of course I know that he had a trick box. I know also who constructed it, and the large amount that he paid for it. When I know also that he could do his escapes equally well in any local box I am not inclined to attach much importance to the matter. He was a very astute man, and what he did he would do thoroughly.

HOUDINI is curiously contradictory in his account of the methods of Davenport. In his book, "A Magician Among the Spirits," he says:

> Their method of releasing themselves was simple. When one extended his feet the other drew his in, thus securing slack enough in the wrist rope to permit working their hands out of the loops. The second brother was released by reversing the action.

But, as I have shown, in a letter to me he said:

> I know, for a positive fact, that it was not essential for them to release the bonds in order to obtain manifestations.

So the previous explanation would seem to have been a fake in order to conceal the real one.

In another letter he says:

> I am afraid I cannot say that all of their work was accomplished by spirits.

The "all" is suggestive. I would be the last to suggest that all of Davenport's, or for that matter all of Houdini's work was due to spirits. For that matter, we have to remember that we are ourselves spirits here and now, and that a man may very well be producing psychic effects without going beyond his own organism. It is in this sense that I suspect the Houdini results of being psychic, and I do not at all insist upon the interposition of outside forces. The two things are not far apart, however, and very easily slide into each other. There is, I hold, the medium's use of his own power, there is a vague borderland and there is a wide world beyond where his power is used by forces outside of himself. I am convinced, for example, that raps may be produced voluntarily by a medium by a psychic effort, and I am equally convinced that at another stage these same raps may be used for purposes quite beyond his knowledge or control.

IS IT possible for a man to be a very powerful medium all his life, to use that power continually, and yet never to realize that the gifts

he is using are those which the world calls mediumship? If that be indeed possible, then we have a solution of the Houdini enigma. One who knew him well and worked with him often wrote to me as follows:

> Often he would get a difficult lock. I would stand by the cabinet and hear him say: "This is beyond me." After many minutes, when the audience became restless, I would say: "If there is anything in this belief of Spiritualism, why don't you call on them to assist you?" And before many minutes had passed Houdini would master the lock. He never attributed this to psychic help. He just knew that that particular instrument was the one to open that lock—and so he did all his tricks.

It is only fair to state, however, that this correspondent, who was in a good position to know, would not admit the mediumship. And yet if "that particular instrument" was, as stated, an appeal to spirits, it seems difficult to claim that the result was natural.

I would not limit my hypothesis to the idea that it was only when he met the Davenports that he first developed these strange powers. He seems only to have met Ira in 1909, and he had certainly done many marvelous feats himself before then. But the history and object lesson of the Davenports must have been well known to him, and have shown him what to avoid.

MRS. HOUDINI, for whom I again desire to express my respect, has told us that her husband left behind him a cipher which would be a test of his return. The action in itself shows that his objections to Spiritualism were not very deep, since one does not propose to use what one really condemns. I have told her that in my opinion, if the test is in the nature of figures, or a name, or meaningless words, then she will never get it. Such things are artificial, and it is very hard to transmit them. If, on the other hand, the test is an actual message or sentiment which can be conveyed into a medium's mind, then I think that it is certain that her husband, with his tremendous energy and power of concentration, will sooner or later get back to her.

It was said that he had some sort of compact with me, but I have no note of the fact, though we often discussed such subjects. Since his death I have had several messages which purported to be from him, but none of them contained the conclusive proofs upon which I always insist. There is one, however, which I cannot entirely discard, for it came through a medium whom I associate with some remarkable results in the past—the same Mrs. Wood, who prophesied his death.

"I am sending you a message from Houdini," she wrote. "'You were right and I was wrong'—Houdini materialized and said those words plainly, and then he instructed me to send the message to you. He has found that his will on the other plane is subject to a higher power, and that his first great lesson there is in humility. He wants to give this message to the world: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God.'"

That is a message which is worthy of the man who may have uttered it, and on it I will end. Be his mystery what it may, he was a great personality, with many outstanding qualities, and the world is the poorer for his loss. I shall always retain an affection for him in spite of our differences, and I hope to meet him again and to hear from his own lips such a message as is quoted above.

"Quick!" shrilled the girl. "Fight! Don't give in!"

Green Torture

By WILLIAM S. NEWELL

The days of human sacrifice to a religious deity have long since passed among the civilized members of the human race; but the devotees of science sometimes feel that their new god demands a human offering—as witness the case of Johan Abt.

BLONDE Signe sat upon a backless bench and stared at the wall opposite. At her left a guard lounged in the open doorway, the sun glistening on his rifle barrel. Voices sounded faintly in an inner room, and occasionally tramping feet and the moving of heavy furniture provoked a tense expectancy in the girl. But

the interminable waiting went on.

Finally the closing of an unseen door was followed by the opening of the one at the end of the antechamber, and Signe recognized the presence, at last, of Doctor Wenn.

He passed her without a glance and addressed the sentry:

"Go inside. We may need you."

When the heavy foot-steps had died away he turned toward her, unfolding the official order which had procured for her this interview and read it rapidly.

"You are *Fräulein* von Esdorf?"

She bowed. "Yes, Doctor."

"This"—he tapped the paper—"instructs me to extend you every courtesy and to satisfy your—interest—concerning the prisoner Johan Abt. What is your wish? Perhaps you will be brief."

The girl restrained a nervous movement of her hands.

"I will try not to waste much time," she promised. Then: "I am Signe von Esdorf. My family is—was—well connected."

Doctor Wenn nodded. The signature to his order proved that.

"My cousin pointed out that this prison and the laboratory within it are under the control of Doctor Albrecht Wenn for research purposes, and that if you wanted to you could grant any request I might make."

"Not all," corrected the Doctor. "And so——?"

"I am the girl who was with—whom Captain Waidner was forcing into his car when Johan Abt killed him."

Again the Doctor nodded. He was familiar with the records.

"Of course, Abt saved me from a very horrid thing," the girl continued, "and naturally——"

"You wish me to secure his release," concluded Doctor Wenn. "*Fräulein*, that cannot be. This man Abt is a man-killer, a murderer under sentence of death. The penalty must be paid."

"NO, PLEASE, Doctor Wenn," Signe protested. "I have no hope of saving his life. It is that we heard—I learned the authorities had given him to you and your assistant for the study of a death-gas—to learn the effects of it—to use if we were forced into war. It must be slow and painful—terrible. I came to see if you would give him back and let them kill him in the usual way—quickly."

The scientist peered intently at her.

"Where did you hear that, child?"

"Why—oh, several places. Ever so many people know of your work here. How the great Doctor Albrecht Wenn and his men study diseases and cures and things, and how murderers who are—waiting—are permitted to choose whether they will take your tests; and how they often choose you. This is true, isn't it, Doctor Wenn?"

"Where did you hear anything about gas?" he asked sharply.

"I don't know. I don't remember."

"Pardon, but you do."

"No, I don't know."

"Answer me, please!"

"Well," Signe conceded, "I heard that Doctor Stauffer at the University had found a gas that would take the place of bullets and men, and that you——"

"*Where* did you hear it?"

"Doctor Wenn, I—I cannot tell you."

The man checked an impulsive gesture. After all, better not antagonize her. She had powerful friends. He studied his order again, the signature especially. When the flush had died from his face he looked up and smiled coldly.

"Miss von Esdorff," he began, "we have become a credulous people because our wise men perform from time to time miracles of scientific research. Please believe that this gas is not one of them. We *have* a gas, not new. It will not replace projectiles or men. We are experimenting in a small way, but please say nothing of what you have heard. We do not wish it discussed as yet."

"Oh!" Signe exclaimed. "I didn't dream it was a secret."

"It is a matter of the State."

"Of course I shall not speak of it to any one," the girl assured him. "I didn't know."

"Thank you," Doctor Wenn acknowledged. "Be sure not to repeat it. It might create bad rumors."

He scrawled a cipher across the face of the order—quite lucid to the Intelligence Department — and replaced it in his pocket.

Then he asked in a less formal tone: "Why should you, delicately reared, distress yourself over a man like Abt? You are high-born. It is impossible any sentiment exists between you."

Signe blushed.

"I've never seen him except upon the occasion of his—of my rescue. But, Doctor Wenn, he did so much for me then, I feel that out of simple gratitude I should do all in my power to end his sufferings. Think what it meant to me! That beast—that Captain Waidner—had me helpless. It was dark; nobody around. Oh, it was awful! Then Johan Abt ran up and hit him over the head, and he fell down dead, and I was free. Any girl would do all she could for a man who had done that for her, whether he meant to or not. Don't you see?"

"THIS does not concern me," he replied, "and it is your privilege to be grateful. But consider, Abt did not act to save you. His aim was to kill his enemy. Nothing more. He might even have struck you if necessary."

"Oh, I can't believe that!"

The Doctor continued: "The evidence showed Abt had sought the officer's life for a long time, had made two previous attempts, and his appearance at your need was merely coincidence. You owe him nothing."

"I know, but, Doctor, the slow death, the pain! If I only can stop that——"

"The man voluntarily chose the laboratory rather than the execution chamber. He was assigned to me. Under the present arrangement he is adding something to world knowledge, and the end is the same. Better that the State take a profit from it."

Signe stared, round-eyed, through the outer doorway.

"Doctor, if he lives through your experiments, will he be set free?"

Slowly the scientist shook his head.

"No, young lady. The court has condemned him to death. The tests will be repeated again and again with higher gas concentrations, as long as life lasts, as with any other laboratory animal."

The girl shuddered. "Oh, horrible! Horrible! Does he know that?"

Doctor Wenn permitted himself a cryptic smile.

"He was told that when we had finished with him he would be free."

"Oh, cruel! But didn't he understand?"

"If not, *Fräulein*, the fault was his. The words were plain enough. If he prefers his own construction, why distress him?"

"It's monstrous!" breathed the girl.

"It is science, Miss von Esdorff.

We are given a problem which cannot be solved in the test-tube, *in vitro*. Therefore we experiment with the living subject, *in vivo*, and employ such means as are available. We are not butchers, but servers of the State."

The girl braided her fingers nervously.

"I suppose you wouldn't listen to an appeal from me to send him back for execution?"

"No, *Fräulein*. The experiments must go on, either with him or another. Now you will excuse me, please. I have already given you much time."

"Supposing I brought pressure to bear?"

"I do not know how great that would be. No ordinary interference could be sufficient. I advise you, young lady, to go home and forget all this. Do not waste your thoughts on murderers."

He bowed curtly and moved toward the inner door.

"Then it's hopeless, Doctor Wenn? I want to do something."

"Quite hopeless." He glanced at his watch. "Besides, Abt has had three breathings of the gas. There are not many more days for him."

"Days!" exclaimed the girl. "God! How long do you intend to drag it out?"

"That we do not know. We are trying to find the minimum fatal dose. Good-by, Miss von Esdorf."

"DOCTOR! Just one more minute, please! May I—will you let me look at him before I go?"

"No."

"Listen, Doctor Wenn. I'll not annoy you with political pressure. I'll not speak of this interview to my cousin or to his highly placed friends. I'll go quietly away. May I see Johan Abt?"

"No."

"I have forgotten about the gas."

The Doctor frowned. "You threaten?"

"No. I'm loyal. But I deserve some little thing. Just for a minute, and I'll go. It isn't much."

Wenn flung up an arm in a gesture of resignation.

"Unheard of," he expostulated, "but come for one minute, and quickly."

He threw the door open, and Signe followed him along a short corridor hung with uniform coats, hats, and belts, to an inner door that gave upon the laboratory.

She was conscious of scraps of conversation and a general air of waiting. Doctor Wenn strode past her into the chamber, and Signe obtained a view of the interior over the shoulders of a guard. The room seemed small for its purpose. However, doors opening from it suggested similar rooms beyond. It presented the usual laboratory appearance of glass, metal, and rubber, and was very warm. Two guards and some spectacled men in white gowns were grouped about a seated figure whom Signe recognized as Johan Abt.

He was stripped to the waist. With every slightest movement the muscles rippled and flowed under smooth ivory skin. He sat surrounded by his keepers, still a splendid physical type, ignorant, stupid, smiling, and unconcerned, awaiting the Doctor's return.

Here was a man whose fault lay in usurping the privilege of the Law —the Law which had denied him redress for a bitter wrong. And he was to die slowly for days. Signe's eyes were moist with pity.

Doctor Wenn donned a gown and joined the group of white-clad men.

"Up," he ordered, and Abt arose to his feet and stood at ease.

"Turn around."

Promptly the man revolved, and once more faced the Doctor, expectantly. The latter half bowed toward the entrance corridor. He had fulfilled his implied promise; had granted the girl's request. He was about to direct a guard to close the door, when Abt spoke.

"Doctor," he asked hoarsely, "is it that I breathe the gas again today?"

"Yes"—brusquely.

"But, so good and kind Doctor, I hurt so much. I burn and pain here and here and here." He coughed violently. "And my nose and eyes, too. I am sick. See! I spit blood. Give me one day to rest?"

At Wenn's sign an assistant opened the door of a strongly built gas-cabinet, and Abt faced toward it with a resigned droop. Then Signe slipped quickly into the room.

SHE came to a halt behind a zinc-covered table which bore a huge glass container of a greenish color. The label caught her glance: Stauffer Gas. So that was it! Green torture.

"Johan Abt," she called, "listen to me. These men mean to kill you. Fight them! Fight them hard! Don't go in there. Make them send you back to prison——"

At the sound of her voice the three guards started toward her, but were stopped by Albrecht Wenn.

"Wait!" Then in a lower tone: "Attend the prisoner!"

The men closed in on Abt, who stood looking at Signe with dull, puzzled eyes.

"Quick! Understand me," shrilled the girl. "Fight! Smash things! You are strong. Don't give in! They are going to kill you slowly—with pain. In prison it will be quick. Oh! Do you know what I mean?"

Still Wenn held up a restraining hand, and his white-robed associates submitted to his authority. The prisoner shook his head and smiled.

"Oh, no, *Fräulein*. You're wrong," he croaked in a tortured voice. "The good Doctor saved me from death. He hurts, but he is kind. He only wants to try things on me. When he is done I can go home. Not so, Doctor?"

Wenn bowed his head in assent.

"When we have finished, you will be free," he repeated.

The prisoner flashed a haggard smile of triumph.

"You poor fool! Don't you see what he means?" stormed the girl. "You will be free when you are dead. Oh, you—you dumb brute!"

"The Doctor is my good friend. I believe in him next to God," said Abt simply. "He saved me once. Why do you think he kills me now?"

Wenn lowered his hand.

"Disillusionment is cruel," he said sharply, "and unwise. And now you must go. I have shown you great forbearance because of the high name which admitted you. You have had your wish. You must leave us now. We have much to do."

TEARFULLY Signe turned to obey him; then a rage at the whole inhuman proceeding possessed her and lashed her into a fury.

"Very well! See how you like it yourselves!" she screamed hysterically, and pushed with both hands against the carboy of Stauffer Gas.

As the great globe crashed to pieces on the stone floor, she sped through the doorway. The others sprang back in horror, with the exception of the prisoner, who leaped

forward to stay her and, with continuing impulse, pursued her into the corridor. Signe slammed the door and heard the latch click behind her.

The next instant Abt had turned back and flung his bulk against the steel panels.

"Here! Here, Doctor. This way!" he bellowed hoarsely. "Open and I will help." He beat against the barrier with all his strength. "It is Johan Abt. Unlock the door. Come out! Come out!" The powerful shoulders heaved and strove. His voice became a frantic rasp. Uselessly he continued his assault. The door was constructed to meet just such attacks, and the men inside could give no aid. They would never open locks again. Never any more.

And now the air in the corridor had a sickish taste and began to burn the throat. Signe strangled slightly. Despite the cunningly fitted door, gas was seeping around it.

"We must get out of here," the girl said, and laid timid fingers on Abt's arm.

He thrust her from him savagely, snarled, and continued his attack on the unyielding steel.

SIGNE steadied herself against the wall. Her hand came in contact with some hanging garment, and she clung to a belt for support. In the dim light she studied the half-naked man as she had studied him before at his trial.

What a beautiful thing he was! Crisp black hair, clean-cut, regular features, a powerful body, lean and perfectly proportioned. It needed only education to light the lamp behind his face—and that lack was probably due to absence of opportunity. He was still young—only a year or so older than herself. What a pity to leave him now to his silly poundings!

She staggered and the garments slipped from their hook and fell into her arms. A heavy object slapped against her, and her groping fingers closed upon the butt of a holstered service pistol. For a moment she did not recognize the thing. Then her failing wits asserted themselves, and she drew it out with unaccustomed hand.

Pointing it at the man she gasped: "Johan Abt, follow me out into the air," and backed quickly into the anteroom. And Abt stumbled after her, hands raised, eyes on this symbol of authority.

Signe collapsed upon the bench and drew in lungfuls of fresh, pure air. She stared helplessly at him, and for a while he stared back coldly. Then her blonde prettiness, her tears, her obvious weakness, appealed to the man, and he essayed to comfort her.

"Don't you cry, *Fräulein*. I won't hurt you," he said in a husky whisper. "I'm a good man."

"Yes, I know," wept Signe; "but what shall we do?"

Her sky had fallen. She had no illusions as to what would follow, and for the moment abandoned herself to hopeless grief. Then she looked up at Abt with a little commiserating sound, for he was a dismaying sight.

"Oh, your poor hands and arms!" she sobbed. "They are smashed to a pulp. And your chest and shoulders! They are one big bruise."

Abt glanced at his cuts and blood.

"Don't you worry, *Fräulein*. They don't hurt—much."

He was beginning to feel less harshly toward this young person. After all, she had championed him in the laboratory, even if she had mouthed foolishness. He shuffled to his feet, and she instantly remembered her rôle of captor.

"Stand still," she ordered, raising the pistol.

He froze gracefully into "attention," and Signe felt the little heap of garments slip from her lap on to the floor. She gazed at the perfect poise of his body. What a magnificent man! A vizored officer's cap had rolled toward him, and on the floor between them lay a tunic bearing its insignia of rank. Signe looked at his bruised, naked torso.

"Put it on," she said, pointing to the coat.

SWIFTLY a mad idea was shaping in her mind.

"The coat—put it on. It isn't much too small. The cap, too," she commanded.

The thought grew. It was impossible; foredoomed to failure. It had no chance, but it was a gallant gesture and offered surcease from inaction. Of course it couldn't be done, but if it could she knew exactly where to hide him. One of Cousin Charles' freight ships was about ready to sail. If Abt could make the seaport!

The man stood, a brave uniformed figure, and Signe buckled the belt about him. The gray prison trousers were bad, but seated in the car . . . Old Captain Wolff would do anything for her! During her father's lifetime he had been a close family friend. As for herself—should she also attempt to escape? Her family was dead. There was only Cousin Charles, who managed her small patrimony. He had invested it in one of his businesses in America. He and Captain Wolff were all in the world who loved her. She and Abt could sign on as members of the crew. She scrutinized the transformed prisoner closely. If only they could win through!

"Johan Abt, do you know the seaport?"

"Oh, yes, *Fräulein.* I worked there many months."

She directed rapidly for a minute. They stepped out into a mercifully empty street. Engrossed in their escape, they rounded a corner, paying no attention to newsboys who were crying something about an Archduke who had been assassinated while visiting Serajevo. They made for the port of ships.

AND there Captain Wolff received them.

The old sailor, after listening to her thrice-told, incredible tale, locked her into his cabin until the sea, billowing behind them, provided sanctuary.

Much later, when land had long since dropped from sight, a discreet member of the crew supported a very sick Abt into their presence and lowered him gently to the deck. There he lay and gazed at them with dull, uncomprehending eyes, while Wolff and Signe explained their case with slow and simple words.

After many repetitions a gleam appeared behind the leaden, indifferent regard, and Signe flashed a triumphant smile at the captain.

But Johan Abt began to beat slowly and endlessly on his breast and to exclaim in passionate regret: "Fool! There was a pistol. I could have shot off the lock and saved the *Herr Doktor!* I am a fool! And the *Herr Doktor* was good to me!"

Butting in on their conversation, I called attention to the landscape.

The Fatal Flaw

By PAUL SAND

If you were given some difficult task to do, and you brought all your energies to bear and turned out a perfect job, you'd certainly expect some appreciation, wouldn't you? But you never can tell. Take the case of the detective who relates the following story.

CHALK one up to failure. Once in a long while a good operative makes a mistake. Take me.

I'm one of the few light-fingered gentry who reform before they are caught. I had raised a few checks and picked a few pockets and might have established a nice practice but for the Little Woman. She had scruples and four children. She thought I could do as well and be respectable and safe as a sleuth of some kind. So I promised.

I was a bit leery of the Police Commissioner, and finally decided to set up as a private agency, which was respectable as far as the Little Woman knew, but which catered, due to natural market pressure, largely to the facilitation of divorce and the discomfiture of business competitors.

One of my prize patients was a tiger lily by the name of Gelt, who was a big stockholder and director in the Eaton Tobacco Corporation. He was one of the most sensitive

and refined manipulators I ever worked for. He never once asked me to have a brother director poisoned so that he could write some dirty work into the minutes. No; I always had to go about things in a tactful, genteel manner that wouldn't offend anybody except in a purely business way.

Three weeks ago old Gelt called me into his office, and I saw right away I was going to get that fur coat the Little Woman wanted.

I took his pulse and temperature and looked at his tongue.

"You're sick," I told him. "What you been eating?"

"Dirt," he said forlornly. "They're fixing to hook me good and proper. McCain called a special session to arrange for a stockholders' meeting for reorganization. I laughed at 'em until I found out they'd swung old Hekklehaller over to their side. He lives out in Seattle somewhere and owns a big block of stock. He wired them an O. K. and they sent a man out yesterday to get a formal proxy. If that proxy's voted, I'm a gone gossamer."

"I see. I'll find out what train their office boy is taking back and loosen a rail."

"Don't be so darn' primitive! No wreck ever killed everybody on the train, anyway."

"Then I'll just knock this buttercup on the head and take the proxy away from him."

"That won't do any good. Old Hekklehaller would get mad when he heard about it and come east to vote in person."

"You mean," I said, somewhat exasperated, "that I've got to give this Virginia creeper ether, and then hypnotize him so he won't know he's been operated on?"

"That's it. They mustn't know till the last minute that they don't have the proxy."

"Ah! We'll just substitute a dummy when we extract the original. Great minds——"

"That's the idea," he admitted, "but you've got to be careful. This is a smart young man they've sent. I've got a sample form for proxies and a copy of Hekklehaller's signature, but the proxy has to be acknowledged before a notary. You'll have to imitate his signature and seal well enough to fool them so they won't suspect anything ahead of time."

"Leave that to me," I comforted him, patting his pillow gently. "Take a shot of aspirin and sleep it off till I get back."

THIRTY minutes later I was on a train that had a sustained muzzle velocity of fifty-seven miles an hour. It was aimed westward and hit Chicago with remarkable accuracy. The next day I was cooling my heels on the back porch of a covered wagon that hardly hit the rails except at the Rockies and the Cascades.

My meat was a young morning glory named Adair, just out of college. He was about twelve or fourteen hours ahead of me. I didn't expect to beat him to Puget Sound, but I hoped to be under the wire with him at the notary's.

I landed in Seattle at ten in the morning and was in a telephone booth before the train actually stopped.

"Has Mr. Hekklehaller just stepped out?" I asked.

"Yes," said a girl's voice.

"Which bank did he go to?" I asked naïvely.

"He didn't go to a bank. I think he's downstairs in Harkerson's real estate office."

"I don't believe it!" I snapped, and hustled around to Harkerson's real estate office.

Inside was my Fred Adair, clean shaven, not a hair out of place, and wearing a tropical worsted regardless of the fact that it was July in Seattle. With him was an artichoke that could not have been given any other name than Hekklehaller. Opposite them was a middle-aged geranium who was trying hard to throw out that look of dignity and importance that most States require of their notaries public.

I saw another man behind a counter, and as I didn't want to go in until I could be waited on, I paused to let a genuine prospect go in ahead of me. I then strolled in to listen in and make my survey at leisure.

I had hardly got in before a third henchman popped up from behind the counter and asked in no uncertain terms what he could do for me. I wasn't exactly caught unawares, but I was irritated at being interfered with.

"I want a house and lot," I said. "Which aisle?"

"All the opportunities we have at present," he apologized, "are on the mainland. We have some nice homes in West Upper East Magnolia Boulevard Park Heights Manor View Extension. 'Superbly suburban,' folks call them, 'suburbanly superb.' Would you——"

"As a matter of fact," I switched off, an idea coming into my head almost unasked, "what I really came in for was to make an affidavit to a statement *regarding* a house and a lot."

"Yes, sir," he said, hiding his disappointment. "Have you the statement with you?"

"I will have if you let me have a sheet of paper."

I pulled out my proxy form to put under the paper in the hope of being turned over to the notary and getting the impression of his seal on both, which was darn' clever, I thought.

I began to scratch together a strong, vigorous statement involving a house and lot, when I noticed that the booster for the West Upper East M. B. P. H. M. V. Extension was dragging out another seal.

"Mr. Harkerson have two of those things?"

"No, this is mine. I'm also a notary."

"Name Harkerson?"

"No. Smith."

"Then don't bother," I waved. "I wanted to speak to Mr. Harkerson personally, anyway. I'll wait till he's disengaged."

He looked aggrieved at my reflection upon his authority to administer oaths and acknowledgments, and put his seal back.

MR. HARKERSON had finished the business of signing and sealing Hekklehaller's proxy to vote chaos at the reorganization meeting of the Eaton Tobacco Corporation. He stepped to the door to speed his fifty-cent clients.

"What I really came in for," I told Mr. Smith apologetically, "was a drink of water. I see you have a cooler. May I step in and get a——"

"No, don't bother," cut in Smith. "I'll get it for you."

The instant his head was turned, I reached over and borrowed Mr. Harkerson's impression seal. I slipped it over the corner of my dummy proxy and squeezed. I was quick enough to get the proxy back into my pocket, but not quick enough to get the seal back on the desk before Smith saw it.

"What you doing with that seal?" he demanded.

I could see that I was in a ticklish position. If I were searched and the sealed proxy found, I'm afraid Mr. Harkerson might have had to refer a nice point in the etiquette of hospitality to the Seattle police, who are unduly strict and conservative in such matters. As usual, I had to think fast.

I broke out into a hearty laugh.

"I'll have to own up!" I chuckled. "I represent the Notary and Corporation Impression Steel Lubricating Company. What I really dropped in for—and this time I mean it—was to demonstrate to you the remarkable effectiveness of our new Islco Oil No. G4 for taking the stiffness out of the hinge mechanism as well as eliminating the squeak that often annoys and sometimes loses a customer."

For a second my empty hand felt too empty—I felt at a disadvantage in not having a sample of lubricant to demonstrate. In a flash I thought of a small bottle of fluid I keep in my pocket for emergencies. With it in my hand, I felt perfectly at home in my suddenly assumed rôle. Very foolishly he did not even glance at the bottle.

"This," I said, "is the very——"

"Get out!" he snapped officiously and not very cordially. "We don't want any to-day. I might have known you were selling something when you first came in."

Disappointed and chagrined, I relinquished the seal to his possession. A demonstration would have cost him nothing; and if he had looked at the bottle, I might have given him a drink.

It had just occurred to me (ideas never come singly) that it would be ingenious and profitable to get an advance glimpse of Mr. Harkerson's signature by claiming to have a check purporting to be signed by him. This little scheme always gets an audience, and frequently a comparison of signature to prove you have been swindled is all a good man needs for a rough reproduction later.

This stratagem, however, I let pass, having just overheard Adair say he was taking the next train east and having just been especially requested to leave by the impatient and tactless Mr. Smith.

I OBTAINED a berth in the same car with my young forget-me-not, and was pleased to note that he seemed quite unconscious of my identity, intentions, and even existence. The proxy he kept carefully on his person, in an envelope in his inside coat-pocket. I had three full days on this same train to observe and study him for the purpose of separating him from the proxy, copying the notary's signature and such other additions on my dummy proxy, and returning the latter in the original's place without arousing his suspicions.

The first day I observed a very attractive young woman in Number Seven. She wore a mannish two-piece serge traveling suit, but had very feminine eyes, lips, and alligator slippers. She was very much interested, I could tell, in the same young sweet william that I was, possibly wondering if he used the same kind of hair slicker as she did.

Adair's back was toward her, and he was consequently unaware of this interest and admiration. I was afraid that if he met her eye, I would have double difficulty picking his pocket of the necessary proxy. However, as you shall see, obstacles are used as stepping-stones by those that know how.

It was not easy to find or create

a situation in which to catch him off his guard. Sometimes there is a sufficient crowd waiting for places in the dining-car to get in intimate, unsuspicious contact, but not on that train. To sneak into his berth at night and try to take it from under his clothes or his pillow or his mattress would be choosing the time he was most likely to be on the *quid nunc*. And you might run into somebody that was after his watch and cash.

I finally decided to lurch out through the curtain of the smoking-room as he came through the passage. An apology would distract him, I thought, long enough for me to fix up the dummy and get the porter to ask him if he'd dropped it.

I watched him in the diner, and as he paid his bill I slipped out ahead of him and waited. I heard the door suck open and shut. I lurched. I had timed it perfectly. A split second after the collision, I slipped the envelope out and flipped it behind my hand, beginning my apology at H hour plus 1 2-5 seconds.

"I *beg* your pardon!" I sputtered. "I should have watched. The train, you know——"

In the semi-darkness, I saw it was not Adair I had plundered, but the girl in Number Seven!

Fortunately this error lent a fervent realism and credibility to my embarrassment.

"Don't mention it," she said, still out of breath. "It was—partly my —fault."

"But what a coincidence," I remarked, more composed, "that it should be you!"

"Why?"

"The porter was just asking me whether I knew who dropped this envelope—with a ticket, reservation, and several other papers in it. I told him I thought it was yours and offered to bring it to you—and here you are!"

"Why," she exclaimed, as I had half a notion she would, "it *is* mine! Thank you so much! I can't imagine——"

"Don't mention it," I begged, and made use of the opportunity to become better acquainted. I chatted with her in the observation parlor, and we got along famously. I know she thinks I must read Doctor Eliot fifteen minutes a day. But despite my personal charm, I could see that her mind was not primarily set for me, but for the more youthful and possibly more handsome Adair. He, however, was too absorbed in his responsibilities for her to catch his eye, which was just as well, for it gave me an opportunity later.

ON MY next lurch from the smoking-room, I was more sure of my man. I slipped the proxy out of his pocket. He accepted my scheduled apology and went back into the observation car. I followed him, sitting down at the writing desk, where I could not only complete my dummy proxy but also watch him in the mirror to see that he didn't detect the document's absence until I could replace it.

This, you say, was taking a long chance. It was. I was no sooner seated than I saw a look of vague apprehension in his eyes, by which I knew he would feel for that proxy in a minute or two. This would not be fatal, but exceedingly inconvenient. I had to think fast; and as is my custom, I did.

I seized a telegram blank and hammered out a message on the typewriter in the corner.

"Porter," I said, out of hearing, "a boy just handed this telegram in at the last station. For Mr. Adair. Know him?"

"Yessuh. I'll take it to him."

Adair was just reaching for his inside coat pocket when the porter handed him the telegram. I watched him as he scanned this:

NEW YORK

MR F Q ADAIR
ENROUTE NO SIX
GRAND BUTTE WYO
QUOTE APPLE SAPRI COTSO
NIONS BANAN ASCAN
TALOU PETEA UNQUOTE
MCCAIN
456PM

"Whether he's got the company code-book along or not," I smiled to myself, "if he reads that, he's got to know his groceries. It'll occupy him a minute or two."

It did; but it had taken my time, too, and I needed more. He frowned a moment over the sheet, shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and finally shoved the telegram into his inside coat pocket!

I was galvanized! It would be but a matter of seconds for him to realize that his hand had not encountered the proxy in that pocket. Drastic action had to be taken, and I am not the one not to take it.

I STRODE down the aisle and slapped him cordially on the back.

"Say, old man," I greeted, "pardon me for intruding on your thoughts, but I have a friend you'd like to meet. She's right out here on the observation platform. I know she'd like to meet you."

He looked out and saw her, and I needed no more to persuade him. Helen—the girl in Number Seven—beamed gratitude at me. In a second or two they were chummy enough for me to excuse myself, wipe my brow, and get back to work.

I finished doctoring my dummy. Butting in briefly on their conversation, I called attention to the remarkably striking stretches of Wyoming landscape and deposited the envelope containing the dummy in Adair's side coat-pocket.

I now had but to check the proof of my pudding by watching him from under cover of a magazine. I saw him think of his proxy (one needs trained eyes for that). I saw him reach reassuringly to his inside pocket. I saw the look of dismay as he discovered its absence. I saw that grimace melt into a frown of perplexity as he located it in another pocket. As I saw him open it and critically inspect it, I was glad I had taken such pains to make a good job of it.

He folded it up and tucked it away with a satisfied, relieved look, and went on talking to Helen. My job was done and his goose was cooked.

Let me say in passing that I felt guilty of having made things harder for him by introducing him to Helen McFee. They became completely devoted to each other. As we got off the train, she stopped me to shake hands.

"You know," she said, "you've been a fairy godmother to us! Fred is returning from a very important trip that he thinks has been successful, and if it is, will bring him new opportunities. We'll be married soon in case everything turns out all right. And we have you to thank for knowing each other!"

She was such a cute little kid that I felt sorry for her. I was on the verge of throwing the whole thing and giving her the proxy back; but where would I and my principal have been? You can't be a three-minute egg in this world.

When I delivered the original proxy, old Gelt was as pleased as a turkey gobbler that has survived

Thanksgiving. He smiled greedily with all his teeth as he tore the paper into bits, tearing at the same time, I thought to myself, the career and happiness of Fred Adair and Helen McFee.

"Good boy!" he said, shaking hands. "Here's your pay and expenses, well earned. Go take a week off."

A WEEK later I dropped around to see if there were any more forgery, larceny from the person, and heart-breaking jobs to be done.

"How's every little thing?" I asked cheerily.

Gelt glowered at me.

"Get out of here, you big cow!" he snarled. "You clumsy clodhopper! You thumb-fingered bumbledum!"

"Me a cow!" I yelped. "My million-dollar pen-hand thumb-fingered! What's eatin' you? Didn't my facsimile fool 'em?"

"Why, you molasses-brained idiot!" he groaned. "You fixed up that dummy proxy so good that I couldn't prove it wasn't the original! And they voted it!"

Thirteen at Table

THERE is probably no popular superstition in support of which more proof can be brought than the idea that if thirteen people sit down at the table together, one of them will die before the year is out. The spectacular example of Matthew Arnold, the well-known English writer, who publicly defied this superstition and died before twelve months had passed, is only one of many instances which seem to prove to the credulous that thirteen is a fatal number. This idea, like the superstition about spilling salt, is supposed by some people to have originated with Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting, "The Last Supper." In this picture, thirteen people—Christ and His twelve disciples—are sitting at a table together, and the whole world knows the tragedy that followed.

All this apparent proof, however, has a much simpler explanation. A well-known doctor has pointed out that if you take any thirteen people of varying ages, some very old and some very young, one of the number, within the natural course of events, will probably die within a year, whether they have sat down together at a table or not. This was much more probable in the Middle Ages, when the death rate was much higher than it is to-day. This fact also shows how ridiculous it is to imagine that calamity can be averted by putting fourteen or more at the table, instead of thirteen, since to do so is merely to *increase* the chance that one of the group will die, there being now fourteen possible people for death to strike instead of thirteen.

She saw the shadow of a man lurking at the side of the house.

Famous Unsolved Mysteries

A SERIES

By ALVIN F. HARLOW

The Fall River Tragedy

Just as the Hall-Mills case proved an unsolvable puzzle to the shrewdest detective minds of the present day, so did the famous Fall River tragedy baffle the Sherlock Holmeses of a generation ago. Who brutally murdered old Andrew Borden and his wife? What was the motive? In all probability, no one will ever know.

ONLY a few months ago, in the city of Fall River, Massachusetts, there died, as quietly as she had lived for several decades, an elderly, gray-haired, sombre woman who a generation ago was the central figure of one of the most noted murder sensations that modern America has known. When she was born, away back in the year that the Civil War began, she was christened Elizabeth Andrew Borden; but thirty-five years ago all America knew her simply as Lizzie Borden—and some would have written after her name the word "murderess." Others at the time were perhaps even more vehement in asserting their belief in her innocence.

The Borden murder, while apparently a simple, uncomplicated

affair which should have been easy of solution, was on the contrary a most baffling one. In some of its features it was one of the strangest in our criminal history. A great student of criminology has called it "the most interesting and perhaps the most puzzling murder which has occurred in this country." Great lawyers wrote long discussions of it. And yet you will be surprised when you read the story to find how simple it is. There was as far as is known, no scandal, no quarrel, no political or sex motive, that could possibly be put forth as figuring in the crime. One of the chief reasons why it was so interesting was the fact that although it was so stark and bold in its broad-daylight execution, there was a veil of mystery beyond which no one could penetrate. The murderer was protected by a chain of circumstances which would not occur once in a thousand times. It was interesting also because of the seeming impossibility of such a thing happening among people who had for generations been so quiet, so colorless, so unemotional, so respectable, so stodgy, as the Bordens. Their name was an old and respected one in New England annals, from the time when the first ancestors landed in the seventeenth century, on down through the Revolution and the less troubled hundred years that followed.

THE curtain rises on Thursday morning, August 4, 1892 — an intensely hot forenoon—and old Mr. Andrew Borden is seen walking toward his home on Second Street, Fall River, carrying a small basket of eggs. He is seventy years old; tall, white-haired, with an old-fashioned fringe of whiskers under his jaw; clad in black cloth in spite of the hot day. President of the Union Savings Bank, director and stockholder in several other companies, owner of business and residential property in the city and neighboring country, he was said to be worth three hundred thousand dollars or more when he died. And yet he lived with traditional Yankee frugality, and was not above the small errand of carrying home a basket of eggs from his farms across the Taunton River.

His home was a modest frame affair of two stories and an attic, not far off the main street of the city. The plainness and simplicity of life there was something of a grievance to his daughters. Mr. Borden was now married to his second wife—she had been a Miss Gray—and his daughters by his former wife were still unmarried and living in his home. Of these, Miss Emma, the elder, was aged thirty-seven, while Miss Lizzie was thirty-two. Women of any age were older then for their years than they are now, and of course the Borden sisters were always spoken of as "old maids." They were quiet and sedate, as old maids were expected to be, but were well liked. Miss Lizzie's only frivolity was that she was extremely fond of fishing—almost an unladylike fad for those days, but tolerated in her because she bore such an excellent reputation in general. Both the sisters were church members and workers, Lizzie being particularly active.

But all was not entirely harmonious in the Borden home. The two sisters—as is so often the case—were not fond of their stepmother, and were more apt to speak of her as "Mrs. Borden" than as "Mother." They were dissatisfied because of the old-fashioned ugliness of the

home and its lack of up-to-date conveniences—such, for instance, as a bathroom. The parents considered such new-fangled ideas expensive and unnecessary. The daughters also complained of a lack of spending money. There were few jobs open to women then, otherwise they might have earned their own. Their father was really not an unkindly old fellow, but very frugal and as fixed and set in his ways as New England granite. He finally gave the girls two blocks of stock apiece—though they do not seem to have been highly productive — and also gave them a regular stipend of $200 a year—which sounds ridiculous to-day, though it must be remembered that a dollar was far more valuable then than it is now.

Notwithstanding these frictions, there had never been any serious quarrel in the family as far as any one knew—and if there had been some of the neighbors would have been likely to hear of it, for there was a house on either side not more than thirty or forty feet from the Borden homestead, and intimate friends scattered all over the neighborhood as possible confidants for one or another of the family.

There was a fifth member of the household who has not yet been mentioned — Bridget Sullivan, the servant, whom the sisters had a whimsical habit of calling "Maggie." Bridget was cook and general servant, save that she did not do any chamber work—and, in fact, was not permitted to enter any of the rooms on the second floor. There were some odd whims and customs in that household. One finds them in many a family of middle-aged and elderly people who have lived for a long time in a rut. There was the habit of locking doors in the Borden home, for example. They were all extremely cautious in this regard. We shall see examples of this trait as we go on.

AT THE time of the tragedy in the house, Miss Emma Borden was visiting friends in another town, Fairhaven, while Mr. John V. Morse, of Dartmouth, Massachusetts, brother of the first Mrs. Borden, had come to visit his brother-in-law. Mr. Morse, a man of about sixty, was a frequent guest in the Borden home, and came and went as he pleased while there, calling on other kinsmen and friends in Fall River, or going out to inspect Mr. Borden's farm property. Whenever he came for a visit, he occupied the guest room, which was the front bedroom and the largest on the second floor. Back of this came the room occupied by the elder Bordens, and one each for Emma and Lizzie—and we are told that each of the parties kept his or her own bedroom locked.

During the night of Tuesday, August 2, Mr. and Mrs. Borden had a slight attack of illness, with vomiting. Miss Lizzie said she was also affected, but not as painfully as the older people. Mr. Morse, who ate the same meals, was not at all upset. On Thursday morning—the day of the tragedy—Bridget also was seized with nausea. When one reads the breakfast menu that morning, which included, besides other things, mutton and mutton broth, and realizes that their diet was always something like this, one might be inclined to attribute all the illness to indigestion and to cease wondering at any crustiness or other peculiarity in the family character.

On Wednesday evening, while Morse sat talking in the sitting room to Mr. and Mrs. Borden, Lizzie was calling on Miss Alice

Russell, an intimate friend who lived in the neighborhood. She talked of going on a little vacation trip, but seemed depressed and fearful of some evil happening. She told of the illness in the family the night before, and expressed suspicion that the milk might have been poisoned. She feared, she said, that her father had an enemy—she had heard him quarrel violently with a man recently and order him off the place. She mentioned a burglary that had occurred some months before, when Mr. Borden's desk was broken open and some money and papers taken. The police, by the way, never found any clue to the perpetrators of this theft.

WHEN Miss Borden came home that evening, she was the last to come through the front door, which she locked behind her. Bridget Sullivan was the last through the side or kitchen door, which she in turn locked. If any one outside the family was concealed in the house that night, he kept himself well hidden.

Bridget came downstairs early the following morning and prepared breakfast; and Mr. and Mrs. Borden and Mr. Morse ate together about seven o'clock. Lizzie came down a little later and had some coffee and cookies. Mr. Morse left about 7:45 for another call, and Mr. Borden shortly afterward went down-town. Mrs. Borden told Bridget to wash the windows in the house, and then she herself went up-stairs to make up the beds in the guest room and her own, and was not seen again. Bridget went to the barn and cellar for pails, mops, and so on, and began washing windows. When she came in from the barn she found all the rooms on the first floor deserted.

She washed the windows on the first floor, and was working inside the house about 10:45 A. M. when she heard Mr. Borden fumbling at the front door. He had just returned with his basket of eggs, and had tried the side door, but was unable to get in. Bridget hurried to the front door to let him in, and found it triple-locked — with key lock, spring lock, and bolt—which was rather more than usual in daytime. She gave an impatient exclamation—she claimed in her testimony afterward that it was "Oh, pshaw!" but one surmises that it might have been something stronger; anyhow, it amused Miss Lizzie, whom—so Bridget said—she heard laugh at the head of the stairs.

Mr. Borden came in and went to the sitting-room. Lizzie came and asked him if there was any mail.

"Mrs. Borden has gone out," said she "She had a note from somebody who was sick, and went to see her."

Mr. Borden took the key to his bedroom from a shelf and went up the back stairs to his room. He came down again immediately, and sat down in the sitting-room. Miss Borden now got out the ironing-board and began pressing handkerchiefs in the dining-room. She asked Bridget if she were going out that afternoon. Bridget doubted that she would.

"If I go out," said Miss Borden, "be sure and lock the door, for Mrs. Borden has gone out."

"Who is sick, Miss Lizzie?" asked Bridget.

"I don't know," was the reply. "She had a note this morning. Don't know from whom it was."

They discussed a dress-goods sale at one of the stores, and soon Bridget went up the back stairs to her

attic room to rest for half an hour before preparing the noon meal. Just after she had reached her room she heard the City Hall clock strike eleven. The house was quiet. She heard no doors open or shut, nor any other sound. She did not think she had been lying down more than ten of fifteen minutes (later evidence proved that it could not have been more than ten) when she heard Miss Lizzie cry out in a frightened way from down-stairs:

"Maggie, come down!"

"What's the matter?" returned Bridget.

"Come down, quick!" called Miss Borden. "Father's dead! Somebody came in and killed him!"

BRIDGET rushed down instantly, and found Miss Borden standing near the side door. Bridget started to enter the sitting-room, but Lizzie exclaimed:

"Oh, don't go in, Maggie! Get the doctor, quick! I've got to have the doctor!"

Bridget understood at once that Doctor Bowen, the family physician, was the one meant. He lived diagonally across the street, and had been consulted only the second night before regarding the illness which nauseated the family. But now he was out for the moment, and Bridget came running back. As she entered, she asked the question which was destined to be asked many times in the days that followed:

"Miss Lizzie, where were you when this thing happened?"

"I was out in the yard," Miss Borden replied incoherently, "and heard a groan, and came in, and the screen door was open——" She broke off and told Bridget to run for Miss Russell. The sight of the frightened servant running caused Mrs. Churchill, who lived in one of the houses next door, to look over at the Borden house. She saw Lizzie standing by the side door, pale and agitated, and called to her, asking what was the trouble.

"Oh, Mrs. Churchill, do come over!" exclaimed Miss Borden. "Some one has killed Father."

Mrs. Churchill hurried across and put her hand on Lizzie's arm.

"Oh, Lizzie!" she said sympathizingly. "Where is your father?"

"In the sitting-room," was the reply.

"Where were you when it happened?"

"I went to the barn to get a piece of metal."

"Where is your mother?"

"I don't know. She had a note to go and see some one who is sick. She may be dead, too, for I thought I heard her come in. Father must have an enemy, for we have all been sick, and we think the milk was poisoned."

Mrs. Churchill ran across the street and asked a group of men for help in getting another doctor, telling them what had happened. One of the men telephoned to Police Headquarters. The record there showed that the call was received at 11:15. Not five minutes had passed since Lizzie's first outcry to Bridget; and as Mr. Borden was then already dead, he must have been killed not more than twenty minutes after he entered the house.

Mrs. Churchill returned to the Borden house, where Bridget soon joined them, followed by Doctor Bowen. Then for the first time some one entered the sitting-room. No one had yet heard from the agitated daughter how her father had been killed. On the side of the sitting-room between the doors leading into the dining-room and

kitchen was a large horsehair sofa. On this lay the body of the old man, with the head and face so hacked and crushed as to be unrecognizable even by Bowen, his friend and physician.

Mr. Borden had removed his coat, and it lay folded on the arm of the sofa, above the pillow where his head lay. His feet rested on the carpet. It was his custom to take a nap in that position every day. There was no sign of struggle; the fists were not clenched, and no furniture was disturbed. Bowen therefore believed he had been killed with the first blow. Although he was a physician of long experience, he said that the sight of Mr. Borden's mangled face and head was so terrible that it sickened him.

He covered the body with a sheet and went out to telegraph the other daughter, Emma. Meanwhile, Miss Russell had come and was helping Mrs. Churchill to comfort Lizzie—fanning her and bathing her forehead with cologne. She shed no tears and exhibited no hysterics or great agitation. But this was not necessarily significant. It is often the case, even after natural deaths, that the person most greatly bereaved does not immediately show the most sorrow. And Mr. Hiram Harrington, husband of Mr. Borden's only sister, who came to Fall River that night, said that Lizzie was naturally of an unemotional nature.

AFTER a few minutes had elapsed, Lizzie said that she wished some one would try to find Mrs. Borden—that she thought she had heard her come in just before she (Lizzie) went to the barn. Bridget refused to go up-stairs alone, but went with Mrs. Churchill to the head of the front stairway. Just as they reached the top, Mrs. Churchill, looking through the guest room door and under the bed, could see the body of a woman lying on the other side of the bed from the door. She and Bridget hurried downstairs again. Entering the kitchen, Mrs. Churchill sank into a chair with a groan. Miss Russell asked:

"Is there another?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Churchill. "She is up there."

Doctor Bowen soon came back and went up-stairs. Mrs. Borden had evidently been struck down while working around the room. She was lying on the floor between the dressing-table and the bed, face downward in a pool of blood. Her head had been furiously hacked and battered, like her husband's. There were ten incised wounds on his face and head, while Mrs. Borden had one wound in the back just below the neck and no less than eighteen on the head. It seemed evident that the work had been done with a hatchet in both cases. Mrs. Borden's wounds were not as fresh or recent as her husband's; the blood had ceased to flow and was coagulated. The doctor estimated that she had been dead an hour and a half or two hours.

The police arrived and examined the two bodies. Before many people had gathered, Mr. Morse strolled in, apparently ignorant that anything had happened. Suspicion was strong against him for a few days, but the alibi he presented seemed to be perfect. The coroner came about 11:45, and found that no robbery had taken place, there still being eighty-one dollars in the murdered man's pockets, besides his keys and papers. The coroner and police went to the cellar and examined some axes and hatchets found there; in fact, the police searched the whole

place, and, as one commentator says, probably found all the evidence that it was humanly possible to find.

THE reader now has all the facts that were ever known as to how the murders occurred. Another officer questioned Lizzie Borden that afternoon, and for the first time the police began to form a suspicion against her. Her statements to the officers were similar to those which she made shortly afterward at the coroner's inquest. She admitted that there had been a little friction in the family, but denied any serious quarrel. She reiterated her story of the strange man who had quarreled with her father, and said that Mr. Borden was also not on good terms with his brother-in-law, Hiram Harrington. She said that she had seen a man run around the house one night during the previous winter, and on a later occasion, coming home one evening, she had seen the shadow of a man lurking at the side of the house.

She was a bit uncertain in her statements as to just where she was when her father came home at 10:45 on that fatal morning. She said that at the moment when he was killed she had gone to the barn loft to look for some lead to be used as sinkers on her fishing lines. She had picked up three pears under a tree in the back yard, and had paused in the loft to eat them. From the loft she could not see the side door of the house, and a man might have escaped thence without her being aware of it. A policeman found some pieces of lead in the loft, which seemed to make that portion of her story plausible.

The police discovered a pharmacy clerk, Eli Bence, who declared that a lady—whom he identified as Miss Borden—had come to his store shortly before the murders and tried to buy prussic acid, "to kill moths in a fur coat." He refused to sell the acid without a prescription, he said. But Lizzie flatly denied that she had gone to the pharmacy or tried to buy poison anywhere.

After the inquest, Lizzie was formally arrested and taken to jail at Taunton. At once there was a tremendous wave of protest and sympathy in her behalf. Her friends and fellow church-members refused to believe that there was the slightest possibility of her being guilty. On the other hand, many who did not know her were convinced of her guilt. The circumstances were indeed suspicious. If the murders were committed by some one outside the family, he was not only fiendishly clever, but lucky beyond imagination. He must choose a time when Emma Borden was out of town, and when Morse—upon whose movements no one could depend—was away for a call. He must conceal himself in the house the night before or early that morning without being noticed by any of the family or neighbors. He must do his violence in a light frame house where all the rooms were connected and where sounds carried well. He must steal up on Mrs. Borden and kill her without permitting her to make the slightest outcry, which would have alarmed others in the house. It was inconceivable to every one how Mrs. Borden—who weighed nearly two hundred pounds—could have been struck down without her fall jarring the house and arousing a question as to what had happened. Furthermore, after killing the woman at nine or half past nine, the murderer must remain concealed in the house until eleven. Then it was necessary for Bridget to go to the attic and lie down, and Lizzie

to go to the barn and remain at least ten minutes. What murderer could have counted on these circumstances? Then it was necessary for him to escape from the house without being seen by Lizzie or any of the neighbors, and he must carry the blood-reeking hatchet with him without attracting the attention of passers-by.

IT ALL seemed well-nigh impossible; but, on the other hand, there were strong circumstances in favor of Miss Borden. Bridget Sullivan might have been suspected, but she was fully exonerated by her mistress—another act which predisposed many persons in Lizzie's favor. It did, indeed, seem impossible that such a woman as Miss Borden could have committed the crime. To begin with, the motive did not seem sufficient. Had she been a fiery, hot-tempered person, a moment of passion might have accounted for one killing—but certainly not for another two hours later. But she was cool, unemotional, thoughtful, quiet, refined, and seemingly gentle in disposition. She had been prominent in church and charity work and had taught a Sunday-school class. It was rumored at one time that her attorneys would plead insanity for her, but this was false. Lizzie Borden was not insane, and, as it turned out, she did not need to plead insanity.

The ferocity of the killings was like that of a man, and a savage one at that, rather than a woman. When such a butchery is committed by a woman, she is almost invariably found to be one of low character or mental deficiency or a drug or liquor addict. That a woman of good family and blameless life, without a stain on her past record, should commit such an act is something practically unknown to criminologists.

There were other and more material facts in her favor. How could a woman of her build catch so heavy a woman as Mrs. Borden after striking her a terrific blow with a hatchet and ease her body to the floor without making a sound or jarring the house? How could she do it without covering herself with blood? Professor Wood of the Harvard Medical School testified at her final trial that it was practically impossible for either killing to be accomplished without spattering blood on the murderer's clothes. Yet half a dozen people who saw Lizzie within ten minutes, perhaps five minutes, after her father's death—and this includes Bridget, who saw her first, and Mrs. Churchill and Miss Russell, who fanned her and bathed her face—saw no blood on her clothes.

"It is safe to say," comments one writer, "that this was the decisive factor in the case."

Furthermore, how could she so quickly have concealed the murderous hatchet or washed it so clean of blood? Professor Wood examined the hatchet and the two axes found on the place, and could not discover the slightest trace of blood. He also examined a dress, a waist, two skirts, and the shoes and stockings of the accused, and, save for one very minute spot which might have been acquired afterward, found no blood thereon.

LIZZIE BORDEN'S trial began on June 5, 1892, ten months after the murders were committed. No trial since that of Guiteau for killing President Garfield attracted such wide attention throughout the country. No less than forty reporters were present—the greatest number

that had ever attended a trial up to that time. Women's clubs and suffrage leaders had espoused Miss Borden's cause, and some of the most prominent woman in the land were present. The building was packed every day and hundreds were turned away. On several days of the trial, Lizzie entered the courtroom escorted by her pastor. On the other hand, there were newspapers in her own State and city which uttered strong opinions against her.

There was an imposing array of legal talent on both sides. One of the attorneys for the prosecution, Mr. Moody, was later in President Roosevelt's Cabinet. The lawyers waged he battle as skilfully as they could with the evidence they had. Lizzie Borden herself did not take the stand; and, outside of eight or ten principal witnesses, the other testimony was vague, irrelevant, or trivial, some of it actually being thrown out by the court.

Miss Alice Russell, the prisoner's friend, sprung a serious bit of evidence against her when she testified that she entered the Borden kitchen on the day of the old couple's funeral and found Lizzie about to put a light-colored dress in the kitchen stove. Lizzie explained that it had gotten bedaubed with paint and was no longer of any use. After she had burned it, Miss Russell remarked:

"Lizzie, I'm afraid that's the worst thing you could have done."

At that, she said, Miss Borden appeared thunderstruck.

"Oh, why didn't you tell me?" she exclaimed. "Why did you let me do it?"

But Miss Russell's testimony and Mrs. Churchill's seemed to indicate that this was the same dress that Lizzie was wearing when they first saw her just after her father's death. If blood had been spattered on it, why did they not see it then? And if she had changed her dress after killing her father, she had made a quick change, indeed, when we consider that dresses were usually in two or more pieces then and much more cumbersome to handle than those of to-day.

The prosecution demanded to know where was the note which Lizzie claimed had been written to Mrs. Borden. Who wrote it and who brought it? When was it received and what action was taken on it? Not a word of testimony was ever brought forward to prove that there ever was such a note. But as against this the court threw out the evidence of Bence, the drug clerk, who claimed that Miss Borden had tried to buy prussic acid from him; while Professor Wood testified that he had analyzed the stomachs of Mr. and Mrs. Borden and found no trace of prussic acid nor any other poison, nor any irritation such as would probably be present if a mineral poison had caused their illnesses of two nights before.

Several minor witnesses were produced in an effort to uphold Lizzie's theories regarding enemies of her father. It was claimed that across the river there was a disgruntled property owner who was bitter against him. A year before the murders, one Mrs. Durfee had heard a man make threats against Mr. Borden; but her testimony was excluded as remote. One Doctor Handy had seen on Second Street about an hour before the murder a peculiar-looking wild-eyed man who attracted his attention. A boy had seen a man jump over the back fence of the Borden home about noon that day. A Frenchman had seen a man of similar description hurrying toward New Bedford. A farmer near the city saw

in the woods a man in a blood-spotted shirt sitting on the ground. Upon seeing the farmer, he shook a hatchet at him, leaped over a wall, and disappeared. This farmer's testimony was also thrown out.

The defense counsel argued rightfully that not one particle of direct evidence had been produced against Lizzie Borden. The judge's charge to the jury was favorable to the prisoner. On June 20, the thirteenth day of the trial, the jury went out about half-past three in the afternoon and deliberated for one hour. At half after four they returned and announced their verdict—"Not guilty."

THE court-room rang with the cheers of those who believed her innocent. But never was public opinion more bitterly divided on a case. For years afterward a newspaper in her own town published a satirical editorial on every anniversary of the crime, indicating that the verdict had been a grave miscarriage of justice. More judicious thinkers, however, believed that no other verdict could have been possible. The New York *Recorder* asked twelve prominent persons to sit as a special jury and write their opinions on the case. Among the twelve were Dr. Edward Everett Hale, Samuel Gompers, De Lancey Nicoll (the great New York lawyer), Lucy Stone, and Governor William Sulzer of New York. Their unanimous verdict was "Not proven."

Professor Wiggin, one of America's greatest authorities on law, in an article on the subject, said: "It is difficult to see how the assassin could have avoided receiving blood-marks during the assaults; it is also difficult to understand what arrangements of implements and clothing and what combinations of opportunity sufficed to allow the accused, if she was the assailant, to remove the traces upon weapon and clothes after each assault. . . . On the other hand, the conduct of the accused after the killings was such that no conceivable hypothesis except that of guilt will explain the inconsistencies and improbabilities asserted by her. The statement about the barn visit and the discovery of the father's death are frightfully inconsistent; while the story of the note requires for its truth a combination of circumstances almost inconceivable. We may add to this the inevitably query: Why did the accused not take the stand to explain these things? Of course it was her legal right to remain silent; but the rule against self-incrimination is not one of logic or relevancy; it is a rule of policy and fairness based on broad considerations of average results desirable in the long run. It cannot prevent us as logical beings from drawing our inferences; and if we weigh the confounding inconsistencies of her statements against her opportunity and her refusal to explain, we cannot help feeling that she did not explain them because she could not: and one side of the balance sinks heavily.

"But," Professor Wiggin concludes, "this is not saying that the evidence justified a conviction."

For thirty-four years longer, Lizzie Borden continued her life in the city of her birth—living quietly but much more comfortably than before her father's death. Most of her friends considered and treated her as an innocent woman who had gone through an unjust and terrible experience. If she had any actual knowledge as to the butchery of that August morning, the secret remained—as far as is publicly known—locked in her bosom until death.

"I reckon as how that'll give you sense!" he growled.

Evidence in Death

By T. T. FLYNN

This is the story of a man who sought to escape the consequences of his crime in a unique way, but who succeeded only in getting stung.

A SUDDEN silence mantled the small clearing on the upper slopes of the Blue Ridge. Through it the hum of bees from the hives arranged in regular order, rose like the beat of surf upon some far-distant beach.

Hardo shook a huge, calloused fist at the slight figure which slumped motionless on the ground. His thick lips curled apart, baring broken, tobacco-stained teeth.

"I reckon as how that'll give you sense!" he growled. Anger coursed through him in a flood, and he raised his foot to kick the fallen man. But something in the limp relaxation of the prostrate form arrested the movement.

He stooped over and gave the body

a shake. But when his hand came away the body settled back limply.

Hardo uttered a curse and dropped to one knee. Within thirty seconds he knew that Brown was dead. This small man from the city, this Brown who a few minutes before had exchanged acrimonious speech with him, was no more. Dead! Must have died even as he fell under the one great blow which Hardo had dealt him over the heart.

It was a shock. Hardo looked down at his huge, broken-nailed hands; opened and shut them as though doubting that they could have accomplished this sudden change from life to death.

THEN, swiftly, came thought of the consequences which would ensue. Many people on the mountain knew that he disliked the slight little man who had come forth from the city seeking health. Some few knew—or suspected—the reason. It was no great secret that Hardo's well-hidden still was close to the spot where the city man had decided to locate his apiary.

First the empty hives had come. Brown had spent several days in nailing together and setting them up. Hardo, wanting no neighbors, had come upon him toward the end. First he had suggested that the place was not good for bees. Then he had declared that he had already picked it out for himself. Both reasons failing to change Brown's determination, he had threatened, and had met indifferent silence.

The silence Hardo had mistaken for assent. He had left, confident that his great size and strength had put fear into the little stranger.

That same day liquor from his own still had loosened his tongue. In Chadburn, the little village at the foot of the mountain, he had boasted about what he had done. And what he would have done had his words not been respected.

Several days later a large shipment of package bees, live bees from the South, had arrived at the Chadburn station. Brown, renting a horse and wagon, had hauled them up the mountain road, into the branching side-track, and over a dim trail to the site of his apiary.

Some hours after Brown had left Chadburn, Hardo entered it, and had promptly been subjected to ridicule by one of the village wits—one who had heard his boast, and had seen the wagon-load of bees going up the mountain.

Hardo had cursed, uttered threats, and followed. He had found Brown busy transferring the bees from the packages to the hives. There had been words, threats, and Hardo had struck savagely over the other's heart. Just once with his great fist. Brown had dropped.

And there he lay—dead!

HARDO raised his right hand and scratched the rough stubble on his not-too-clean cheek. His broken teeth shut tightly on his quid of tobacco, and his small eyes searched the clearing. His mind, sharp enough in its way, raced rapidly.

There was law in that section of the Blue Ridge. Abner Seebins, the portly sheriff of the county, was efficient. Hardo had pursued Brown with threats on his lips. As soon as news that Brown was dead became public, the law would be after Hardo. Flight would do him little good. He had the sense to realize that. Possessing little money, less knowledge of the world outside, conspicuous by reason of his size, there was small chance that he would go free long. And fleeing would set the seal of certainty upon his guilt. There must be some other way. There had to be!

The minutes dragged by as Hardo stood over the body of the man he had killed, driving his brain to desperate thought.

Suddenly the brush at one side of the clearing rustled. Hardo swung quickly around and glared at the spot. A witness would kill his last hope.

The sounds grew louder. The bushes parted slightly. A little animal with a white stripe up its back walked slowly into the clearing.

Hardo cursed. Skunk—looking for a meal of honey bees. At the sound of his voice the skunk looked at him casually and then continued out into the clearing.

Hardo let it go. He had no gun along. Was not rash enough to approach closer. His mind slipped back and once more grappled with the problem which faced him.

It would do no good to assert that he had not seen Brown. His story would never be believed. Neither would it do to maintain that some one else had killed him. That would never be believed, either.

His gaze dropped to the skunk, which had halted before one of the hives and was eating the bees as they flew forth, apparently oblivious of a dozen or so enraged insects which were trying to sting through its thick coat of fur.

AS HARDO watched, an idea struck sparks in his mind. A cunning gleam came into his eyes. His lips parted in a coarse smile of relief. Escape was going to be easy and simple, after all.

He did not delay. He found a stone and hurled it at the skunk. Two more sent the little animal in reluctant retreat to the shelter of the woods.

Before Hardo had appeared on the scene Brown had unloaded all of the package bees from the wagon and introduced about half of them into the hives. The rest were stacked a few feet away.

The wagon was behind them, the horse unharnessed and tied to the wheel, with slack enough to graze.

The seat-cushion of the rickety old wagon was a burlap sack filled with straw. Hardo went to the wagon, took out his knife, slit the string which tied the end of the sack, and emptied the straw out in the wagon. The string he carefully saved.

The package bees were in little open cages with sides of screen-wire. From the empty ones on the ground, Hardo could see just how the dead man had been opening them.

He approached the pile and picked up a cage. It was filled with a clustered mass of live bees, fully two pounds in weight. He took out his pocket-knife and pried out the tacks which caught a small slide at the top. With care he fitted the end of the sack around the cage escape. Then opened the slide and shook the whole mass of bees into the sack.

When all were in he closed the mouth of the sack with his hand and threw the cage away. Six more cages he emptied in the same manner. The burlap sack gradually filled with a roaring, surging mass of angry bees.

HARDO was stung many times while he worked, but he proceeded doggedly. Stings were part of his plan. They were painful, but far better than a lifetime behind the bars or a stretched neck.

At last he was satisfied with the number of bees he had collected. He took out the length of twine he had saved, retied the mouth of the sack, and laid it on the ground.

Without squeamishness he went to the dead man, lifted him, and carried him to the edge of the clear-

ing, whence the dim trail led out. There he dumped him on the ground.

On sudden thought he removed the dead man's coat, rolled his sleeves up, opened his collar.

Holding the coat, he went to the horse. Quieting it with soothing words, he bound the coat loosely around its head, arranging it so that, while the animal's sight was shut off, the coat would fall free with little urging.

He untied the tether and led the blindfolded beast up to the other end of the apiary. There the hives were all empty as yet. Back and forth Hardo led him, and now and then he himself kicked one of the empty hives over.

Finally he halted the horse. For a full minute he stood in his tracks, looking thoughtfully about, searching for anything that he might have overlooked, collecting his thoughts for the next steps of the plan.

At last he nodded and led the blindfolded horse ahead, among the hives that were filled with bees. The animal, hearing the bees about him, began to be frightened. But Hardo soothed him carefully and led him to a point his eyes had selected.

There he halted the animal. Stepping aside, he quickly overturned the nearest hive, and then darted around to the other side, repeated the action, and ran toward the wagon.

The bees, already nervous from their recent rough handling and change into new quarters, rose from the wrecked hives in angry clouds. Hundreds of them struck at the blindfolded horse.

It started as the fiery darts pierced its skin. Reared and plunged to one side, and upset another hive. The bees grew thicker in the air. As their stings came thick and fast, the horse fairly went mad. It reared and plunged and careened about. Hive after hive went over before its blind charges. The cloud of angry bees grew thicker.

At last the animal shook the coat off its eyes, and with sight restored raced for the shelter of the woods, a swarm of bees trailing after.

HARDO worked quickly. With a sweep he gathered up the pulsing bag filled with bees and backed to the edge of the clearing. His knife severed the string once more. Grasping the sack at the bottom corners, he lifted high and shook the whole roaring mass of bees out —down over the corpse slumped at the end of the wagon.

Still grasping the sack, he left the spot at a run, not forgetting to upset and trample through the unopened packages of bees as he went, liberating additional thousands to swell the mad host which raged about the clearing.

Then, as the horse had done, Hardo fled, and almost as madly. For the bees were quicker than he had thought they would be. Hundreds of them were on him before he could get away. Dozens upon dozens of sharp, fiery darts pierced the skin in every part of his body. He screamed from the shock and the pain.

Waving the sack about his head, running half-blindly, he charged through the woods, cursing and groaning. When, after a full quarter of a mile, the last of the bees had been shaken off, Hardo was staggering and in agony. He cast himself upon the ground and swore weakly, while he gathered wind and strength.

When, a few minutes later, he again stood on his feet, his body was beginning to swell. The bees had left their marks on every exposed inch. They had even crawled far up his trouser legs and up the

sleeves of his coat. But delay had no place in his plans, and he went on.

AT THE estate of Doctor Julius Peabody the summer guests were gathered around the tennis court, watching a fast game between the tall, athletic doctor and one of his men guests. Hardo burst out of the bushes a hundred yards away and made for the court at a stumbling run.

Every eye fastened on him with amazement as he came up, huge, bulking, his hands and stubble-covered face swollen, his chest heaving as he gulped huge drafts of air.

"The doctor!" gasped Hardo, speaking with difficulty. "I want the doctor!"

Doctor Peabody strode off the court.

"What is it?" he asked. "Man, have you been cutting down a bee tree?"

"No! Bees stingin' him to death!" Hardo burst out. "Do something!"

"What's that? Say it again."

Hardo gulped more air and became slightly calmer.

"City feller named Brown was locating an apiary over in the woods. His horse got stung an' ran away. It upset the hives an' let the bees out. They lit on us, millions o' them. We ran. Brown yelled out that they was killin' him, and then fell. I went back an' tried to get him away, but the bees stung an' stung till I had to drop him an' run fer my life. I feel like I'm goin' to die now. An' he's back there with 'em."

Hardo's appearance bore out his story. He was a pitiful-looking object. There was so much swelling around his eyes that he was finding it difficult to see. His face was rapidly becoming shapeless. The pain must have been great.

The ladies looked at him and made compassionate remarks. But the doctor kept his mind on the central part of the story.

"You say this Brown is back there unconscious, with the bees stinging him?" he demanded sharply.

"Yes!"

Doctor Peabody turned away, snapping: "I'll get my emergency case. Wait here for me." He set off across the lawn at a run.

Within two minutes he was back. In one hand he clutched a small black emergency case; in the other a roll of mosquito netting.

"Now," he said, "where is it?"

"Follow me," mumbled Hardo.

As they turned away the doctor said: "You ladies might see that everything is ready to receive a case. The men had better come along. We'll probably need some muscle to carry him back."

THE return trip to the clearing was a continuous session of pain for Hardo. His whole body ached with the fire of the poison. His face, still swelling, cut off his sight more and more. Now and then he blundered into a sapling and suffered additional pain.

But he made good time, straining every nerve and muscle as though each word in his story were true. Underneath the torture his body was undergoing, his spirit glowed and expanded with the knowledge that he was edging away from the path that led to the grim, dark prison and gallows. There was no one to question the truth of his story. No one who could say that anything else had happened.

They halted several rods away. From there they could see the dark clouds of bees that still filled the air. Could hear the sound of their angry flight.

On the sod at the edge of the clearing sprawled the inert body of

Brown. A coating of crawling bees covered it, and the air directly above was thick with them.

"There!" said Hardo thickly, sensing more than seeing what was before them. "There's where I had to drop him. They got to stingin' me so bad I thought sure I was goin' to die. I jest had to run!"

DOCTOR PEABODY set his case down on the ground and unrolled the mosquito netting with a flip of his hand. Around his head he wound it, and one of the four young men who had accompanied them tucked it into the doctor's collar so that there were no spaces which would admit a bee. The doctor rolled his sleeves down and buttoned them tightly at the wrists.

"I'll bring him back here," he said briskly. "You men had better cut some branches and make ready to fight bees."

As the doctor went forward, he broke branches off the saplings by the side of the trail and made a short, crude broom of them. Then with a swift rush he reached the body. Sweeps of his whisk cleared most of the bees off it. Hurriedly he gathered it under the arms and backed down the trail as fast as he could.

The bees had quieted much by that time. They did not follow the doctor as they had the horse and Hardo. He received some stings on his hands and ankles. But as he left the clearing behind, the bees gradually abandoned the chase. The few that were left when he reached the party were dispersed by vigorously waved branches.

Hardo could hardly see. In fact, he did not want to see. What was done was done, and the less he saw of it the better. So he sat off at one side with his swollen face buried in his hands and groaned, partly for effect and partly from real pain.

Doctor Peabody took one look at Brown's face and shook his head. He stooped over and rolled up an eyelid. Then, to make sure, he opened his case, took out a stethoscope, unbuttoned the shirt, and listened for heart action. He was definite when he stood up.

"Dead! Dead before this man reached us. Not a thing we can do."

"I was afeerd of it," groaned Hardo. "But ef I had stayed here, there would have been two of us."

THE doctor looked at him curiously and then lit a cigarette.

"An unusual happening," he mused. "I don't know when I've heard of a man's being stung to death. Just how did it happen?"

Hardo shook his head.

"It was the horse that started it. Brown was fillin' his hives with bees, an' one stung his horse. It broke loose an' ran wild. Before we knew what was what, it had dumped a lot of 'em over.

"Quicker than a flash the bees was on us. I never seen so many in my life. They covered us an' stung and stung. We both started to run. I heard Brown call out: My God, they're killin' me!

"Next thing I knew I was runnin' alone. I looked around an' saw him on the ground, with the bees all over him. I went back and tried to get him out. But I couldn't make much time, an' I thought I was goin' to die, the way they was throwin' stings in me. Finally I dropped him an' run fer my life."

"Bees didn't kill Brown," announced the doctor suddenly. "He died of heart failure."

Hardo jerked. A sudden feeling of panic filled his breast. But the doctor's next words reassured him.

"Heart failure," went on the doc-

tor musingly, "brought on by shock. Undoubtedly the many stings he received acted on his weak heart, and it gave way. Was he stung badly when he fell?"

"Terrible," said Hardo strongly. "He yelled, like I said—'My God, they're killin' me!' And when I tried to get him away they were all over him, stinging him all the time."

"H'm!" The doctor nodded. Then he turned to the other men: "We'd better go closer and get a good look. Information will have to be given at the inquest."

LEAVING Hardo seated, they went toward the clearing.

Hardo dimly saw their backs through his puffed lids. The thing was almost over. The doctor was going to furnish the last bit of proof that was needed to clear him.

The others quickly returned.

"Well," said the doctor briskly, "we'd better take steps to clear everything up, notify the authorities and all that. Now, while I think of it—are you certain that this man was badly stung before he fell? Enough to cause shock which would stop his heart?"

"Mister," Hardo assured him earnestly, "ef you had been there, you wouldn't ask that. I felt like I was goin' to die myself! And Brown was covered with 'em!"

"You are sure?"

"I should say so! Why, when I went to drag him out I could see hundreds of little stings which had come out of the bees and stayed in him. Ef he had a weak heart, that's what killed him, all right."

"H'm," remarked the doctor. He nodded.

Two of the men had strolled around slightly to the rear of Hardo. When the doctor signaled they fell upon him. And the other two seized him from the front. He found himself flat on the ground, with each arm and each leg held securely.

He cursed, tried to sit up, and when they would not let him demanded as heatedly as his swollen lips would permit: "What's the big idea?"

"You are charged with the murder of Brown," said the doctor coldly. "We are going to turn you over to the sheriff."

"Hit's a lie!" screamed Hardo desperately. "They stung him to death! You said so yourself!"

"You fool," said the doctor calmly, "if you had contented yourself with saying that this man dropped as soon as the horse got loose, you might have been believed. But you swore that he cried out that the bees were killing him. Said you saw hundreds of stings on him. That was a lie. It has been demonstrated that bees will not sting a dead person. This man has not a sting on him. He was dead before the bees got loose. I found a slight bruise over his heart, where he was struck by a club or a fist. You killed him—and then tried to cover the thing up. Might have, if you hadn't tried to lie so strongly."

"Hit—hit ain't so," said Hardo uncertainly.

"You'll find out at the trial," the doctor assured him.

Then Hardo sensed that he was lost. He had not dodged the gallows. Rather, he had made his probable guilt a certainty. The ordeal he had been under, his pain, the shock of his sudden plunge into the arms of the law, broke him.

"I never meant to kill him," he whimpered, his swollen face working.

"Too bad," said Doctor Peabody unemotionally. "Then you shouldn't have struck him. Let's get him to the sheriff, boys."

Again I saw that white, white hand—— holding the three monkeys.

Long Shadows

By KATHARINE HAVILAND TAYLOR

A SERIAL—PART III*

WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED:

ANGELICA BURKE, whose mother has just died, comes on the steamship *Atlantis* from Europe, where she has lived for years, to *Long Shadows*, the New Jersey home of her AUNT AGNES. But her aunt and her eldest cousin, ROGER GARRISON, are so kindly and cheerful that Angelica is immediately put at her ease, though she is rather distressed by WILLIAM, the youngest of the three cousins, who is surly to her, and by PERCIVAL, who is mentally unbalanced. TOKI, the Japanese servant, arouses a feeling of distrust.

Angelica is assigned to the East Room, which is said to be haunted by a ghost on moonless nights. It is raining on this first night, and she is afraid to go to bed. Suddenly she sees outside her window a face so white and thin that it suggests a skull. The light goes out, and the closet door is outlined by a weird, bluish light. She invokes Roger's aid, and he plays cards with her till morning, when, soothed, she goes to sleep.

Her aunt wakes her up with the news that BLAKE CHESTER, an old friend, has committed suicide on the front porch during the night—with Roger's dagger, which has on it a curious emblem of three monkeys. On viewing the body, Angelica recognizes the face she saw at the window in the night. She also learns that THEODORE CASSELL, purser of the *Atlantis*, has disappeared.

* The first two instalments of this serial appeared in the November and December issues. Copies will be sent anywhere in the United States on receipt of 25 cents each.

A letter which throws suspicion on the relations between Angelica's mother and Blake Chester is discovered among his belongings. Greatly perturbed, Angelica decides to follow the advice of DOCTOR FIELD, a pleasant young man who has attended her and has won her confidence, to quiet her nerves by playing on the piano. But in the piano she finds a strange note and a large envelope engraved with Blake Chester's name. Before she has a chance to open it her aunt comes in to introduce her to ROY, a disagreeable youth who works under William at the telegraph office, and then to take her up to Percival's rooms for a visit.

While up there they hear a scream. Aunt Agnes runs out to investigate, and Percival catches Angelica's arm and holds her prisoner, the while he wildly asks her questions which are more or less unintelligible. She is rescued by the appearance of Doctor Field and JANETTE, the maid who is in charge of Percival, and who is devoted to him.

Back in her own room, Angelica gives the envelope to Doctor Field, who opens it, finds in it twenty-one thousand-dollar bills, and then takes charge of it and puts it in his pocket. He promises to come back for her at six o'clock, to take her away from that horrible house, but—he does not come back.

And now go on with the story.

CHAPTER VIII

MORE RAIN

AFTER Doctor Field left me, I heard him playing the piano in the drawing-room, and I smiled to think of the skill with which he was cloaking his investigation. I could imagine his wandering toward it as he, pacing to and fro, talked with my aunt of my nervous state; his striking a key; his murmuring: "Good tone," and then his settling to weave with clever modulation the wreath of Southern melodies that came to me, muted by distance. And as he did this I could imagine how sharp his seemingly casual gaze would be. I began to feel safe. I was not to spend another night in the East Room, and I had given into safe care—I was certain then—the twenty thousand dollars I had found in the old Steinway. A better and steadier mind than mine was grappling with the problem and trying to find reason for the mysteries which made Long Shadows a chilling place in spite of its cheery look and even in the brightest of daylight.

I saw Toki pass the door that Doctor Field had left open on quitting me.

"Toki," I called.

He appeared quickly, and I noticed, with a little shock, the noiselessness of his step.

"Toki, what was the noise—the scream?" I asked.

Toki smiled.

"Very bad boy run into road and become knocked down with motor. He scream very loud. Motor go on, not heeding scream. Boy get up, uninjure, but very mad."

"It sounded as if it were in the house," I ventured.

"No, Miss Burke. Boy in road scream who was knock down by motor. Running front the motor like the chicken. Not to blame, motorist, but running on, after hit, show him to be ungentleman."

I smiled—it was impossible not to smile at the combination of Toki's earnestness and queer English.

"I'm glad he wasn't hurt," I said. "But it *did* sound as if it were in the house."

"No, Miss Burke," Toki contradicted in his suave, oriental way and

with a slight bow; "you mistake. Boy was in road, also motor, and at one time, which is very bad for some one always." Then he told me that my aunt wanted to know if I would take tea with her in the library in a half-hour.

I said: "Please tell my aunt I shall, and with great pleasure, Toki."

He thanked me and went on.

THEN I lay on the bed, reviewing the nightmare terror that had been mine while I was held by Percival in his chambers. What had Percival meant by his question about Mr. Cassell? And by his "They didn't do—*that?*" Who were "they"? What hadn't "they" done? Where was Mr. Cassell, who had "disappeared"? Had he been seen in the village, and on the road t at led to Long Shadows? And what was in the cupboard that was stronger than locks and keys? Why had the man who had killed himself left a card for me and twenty thousand-dollar bills in the piano? Why had the man who had killed himself had that letter from my father—if he had? How had he managed to peer at me through a window that was twenty-some feet above the ground? How had he got the dagger? Why did they say my mother used a seal on her letters that stamped the three small monkeys? What had Toki put on the thermometer Doctor Field asked him to wash, and why? Why had William been out of the house the night before—as he had, if Doctor Field were correct? How had Doctor Field known William was out of the house? Why had I heard the doorbell ring—when it was out of order? Why had a man who had not been sent or seen before that moment by any of the villagers come to repair the bells? Why was my aunt interested in the evil-faced boy I had seen in the drawing-room? Who had screamed? I could have sworn that the scream had been *within* the house! Why did Percival have a penchant for torturing me? Was this a part of his madness, or a part of the atmosphere that was turning the house into an evil place where suspicion thrived and peace was a thing unknown? What made the divide I had felt, rather than seen—the divide which kept Roger and his mother apart from William, the austerity of whose face made it, at moments, cruel? Why had Percival slipped into this semi-maddened state? And when the malignant force or person who was stacking the cards threw down his Royal Flush, who would be the Queen, the Jack, the King? And who would be ruined by the game, and who would pocket the winnings?

And, ironically, I recalled: "A few small things must wait."

MY AUNT was waiting for me in the library. Toki had the tea cart, gleaming with silver and flashing white napery, set before the fire.

"This," said my aunt, as I joined her, "draws one somewat nearer to the normal. Sit down, child. You said lemon and two lumps yesterday, didn't you?"

"Yes," I answered; "and your remembering it is so like your thoughtful loveliness!"

"You're a sweet pussy," she said. She poured my tea, and Toki gave it to me. "Hear the doctor playing?" she asked. I said I had and that I had enjoyed it. After looking around, Toki left the room. My aunt looked to see that he closed the door after him.

"Plays nicely," she stated. Then she laughed. "First time I've heard him play in years," she said as she settled back in her chair. "Music is in ill repute with the Field family.

An aunt of his, very musical, left a perfectly good husband much too often in order to be with some one who 'understood' and who also played. But never mention that, child. It is an entirely muted fact. *Some* one, however"—she smiled unhappily, sighed, and shook her head —"*does* know of it, and young Field is still *paying* that some one to keep it quiet—or I *think* he is. His aunt told me that he was 'protecting' her. We were girlhood friends. Went to the same school. Those things hurt when they touch you closely. When they're a little farther away, one listens to such tales avidly—or, at least, I do. What about that gossip you brought me, by the way?"

I told her what I could remember of it, and after I had recounted the ugly tales, she commented upon them, and in each case she had the story of one disgrace tied to the principal figure in another! I told her, laughing, that she was mixed. She laughed with me.

"Well, after all," she pointed out, "it doesn't much matter. I'm not quite as bad as I paint myself, for I'm only interested in these stories for the moment, and they don't take deep hold. More tea, dear?"

I passed my cup, for the tea was remarkably good, and it was cheering to sit before the fire and drink it.

IN THE midst of a little pause she laughed her soft, gentle laugh.

"Stubborn, those Fields," she stated in explanation of her small rise of mirth. "Young Field wanted the piano top up—said the tone was 'hideously hushed'—and even after I'd told him the piano was nailed shut and hadn't been opened for twenty years he persisted in trying to open it. Your uncle, my dear," she went on, "nailed that piano top down after we'd had a guest who hammered from dawn until dark and after."

I stared at her blankly.

"But young Field didn't get it open with all his trying," she added as she helped herself to a biscuit.

I knew the piano top *would* open. Or—I knew it would open if I weren't going as mad as was Percival. Hadn't I that very morning opened it to reach in among the twanging strings and bring out that paper that had faded to nothing as I read it? And—the envelope with Blake Chester's name on it that had held a small fortune? I started to speak, and then I stopped. I would not speak of this to my aunt until I had consulted the man she called "young Field," and I would abide by his advice, which would be given me, I thought then, at six or a little after.

TOKI tapped on the door, to come in with the paper and the mail on a silver tray. My aunt tossed me the paper before she began to slit open the few envelopes that had come to her. I read, sketchily, the news of the day; headlines about mysterious murder cases, that seemed drab and prosaic in the face of all that I knew—or, rather, that I didn't know! Then I looked at the weather report and saw: "Rain continued in the Eastern portion."

No moon again that night. Not that it mattered to me, or that it would, and yet my skin tingled.

I noticed that the door into the hall was a little open. I *felt* that something was outside.

"Just a minute," I said to my aunt, "and I'll mend the fire."

"Wonder why every one loves to poke fires?" she murmured.

I tiptoed toward the door, and I flattered myself that my step was as silent as had been Toki's when I noticed it. I flung the door open to

step into the hall. Toki was standing by the door, flattened against the wall. He had been listening. Without a change of face he stepped a little forward and became erect as he said:

"Anything was wanted, Miss Burke?"

"More coal," I said, "if you please, Toki."

I made my slow way back into the room. My aunt was looking at me over the letter that she was reading.

"*That* sort of thing," she said in an undertone, "is the sort of thing I mean. Constantly *spying*. I loathe it—I loathe anything that isn't open and aboveboard. I'm going to give him notice at the end of the month."

Then she stopped speaking, for Toki was heard coming back along the corridor.

DINNER was a none-too-cheerful meal for me. It was set for seven, and by seven I was beginning to be horrified by the suspicion that Doctor Field might not only be late but that he might not be coming at all. And if he didn't come, ahead of me was another night in that house, unless by some excuse or other I could escape. And where was Doctor Field, who had in his pocket the twenty one-thousand-dollar bills?

Again Toki passed cocktails in the drawing-room—cress sandwiches with them this night. Roger and William were alike cast down—Roger seeming himself but once, when he thanked me for the note I'd written him—and I knew before they spoke that the writing experts had testified that the letter unearthed in Blake Chester's bank-box had been written by my father. After a little interval I questioned them about it, to find that my supposition was right.

"But," said Roger, "you m-mustn't w-worry, Angelica. N-nothing can b-be p-proved against you. It w-was suicide—th-that f-fact was c-clearly shown."

"Angelica naturally wants the fact proved and the reason sought, *don't* you?" William questioned severely, turning to me.

"I've never wanted anything so much," I said loudly, thinking of my mother and of the blight that had been set for others upon her memory. *I* knew the truth! I knew that this thing which had been implied about her and Blake Chester could not be true. But others had not known my mother as well as I, and the world credits evil more quickly than it credits good.

I looked at the clock: a quarter before seven, the hands said at that moment. I listened, strained, for the sound of a motor outside. I had never known, until that moment, such tension or such desperate, taut, nerve-stretching *hope*.

"Dinner," I heard Toki say from the doorway a few minutes later, "is served."

"And a good one it is!" said my aunt. "I thought we all needed cheer. I had Toki chill some of your Pol Roger, '79, Roger. I hope you don't mind?"

"N-not at all," Roger answered her. "W-what could be n-nicer than to d-drink to the l-loveliest girl th-this s-side of heaven?" he asked, as he looked at me.

I slipped my arm through his as we traveled the hall. It was good to feel the solidity that radiated from him and to know that he was back in the house.

A TALL clock back of me in the dining-room made me more than once turn toward it. Doctor Field had said *six*. The fruit cup and the soup came and went, and it was now twenty minutes past seven. William, I saw, had noticed my looking at the clock, and he was wonder-

ing about it. Roger and his mother were far too easy-going to notice any one's nervousness. Percival was "not well enough to come down for dinner." I devoutly thanked God for it.

Roger and William made every effort to talk lightly of things that were entertaining, for the memory of what had happened the night before was over us all to oppress and disturb us. And in the midst of this talk a few purely intimate family matters were touched upon, and one of these revealed to me the reason for my aunt's interest in the evil-faced boy I had seen that morning.

"Mother," said William, after he had murmured something about Roy's going to New York—"Mother is so much the mother that she has looked after more than one weak-willed boy who works at the office. This Roy was particularly her pet, because he was—and I suppose still is—a particularly bad young scamp."

"There are good things in him," insisted my aunt heatedly.

"Um," William muttered.

"There *are!*" she contested. "I hated to see him go. The temptations of a large city are bad enough for a strong lad, and for Roy, of course, they will be doubly trying."

"Oh, he can find temptations anywhere," William vouchsafed, as he cut a slice from the cheese Toki was passing to him. "Even here," he ended.

"No doubt, but it will be harder for him," my aunt declared.

I turned to look at the clock. Twenty minutes before eight. Toki filled my champagne glass.

"The wind is rising again," said William. "I noticed it as I came in."

"And m-more rain," Roger added. "And t-too wet for p-planting as it is! I think it's t-too bad."

We stood up as the clock chimed eight mellow, low strokes, but all that I heard through them was a threat and the quickening beat of my heart that now belonged to a coward.

WE WENT to the drawing-room. Again Toki set up the table and brought the cards, score-blanks, and pencils. We sat down. Toki left.

"Close the door after you, please, Toki," my aunt called.

He closed it.

Roger laid his thick hand on his mother's thin one that was heavily veined by age.

"It's t-true about your m-mothering every one," he said. "And d-don't think we're careless of all that it m-means!"

William spoke in the chill, decisive way which was characteristic of him. "But a total loss of energy when you attempt to 'mother' or do anything for Roy Peters. I was heartily glad when he told me he was going to New York, for although he was useful at the office—he'd learned to take and send wires, and I did use him in a pinch—I had a feeling of slyness in him that I disliked."

We drew and turned up cards. It was my deal.

"Look at that child shake!" said my aunt. "Deal for her, William."

I longed to look at the clock, but I knew I mustn't. Had something stopped outside? No!

"Certainly," William answered as he dealt. "And what's more," he went on, with a reversion to his original theme, "a great many people don't understand your attitude, Mother. They're not built to. For instance, Machibu in Harvard *never* understood!"

"And wh-who was *he?*" Roger questioned as sharply as he could speak. I could see that he resented William's criticism of their mother.

"Fellow from Japan. Very well born. Mother knew he was over here alone, and she used to send him little gifts and letters—everything she could find about Japan," William explained. "*You* remember," he added irritably.

"D-do now," Roger admitted, "b-but I'd forgotten. And I w-want to s-say that any one who misunderstands s-such sweetness is a c-cad who ought to be h-horsewhipped!"

"I think so too!" I agreed warmly as I picked up my cards.

HALF after eight. I moistened my dry lips.

"Did you say two spades?" my aunt questioned, looking at me.

"No," I stammered; "or if I did, I didn't mean it. I said one club."

"William has already bid two diamonds," she pointed out patiently.

"Perhaps you would rather not play, Angelica?" William asked in his school-teachery way.

"Oh, I *want* to play!" I contradicted desperately. And I did want to play, and to play *late*. If Doctor Field didn't come, I would do everything in my power to keep the game going.

"I saw Field as I came home," said William during the next deal (I saw the drawing-room door pushed in from the hall, and I knew that Toki was again listening), "and under rather peculiar circumstances. He was in an ambulance with one of his patients, evidently. The fellow was struggling with him, and quite wildly. My say, I think? One heart."

I heard Roger say: "B-by."

I stared down at my cards, which danced before me a mixture of twisting black and red spots. I mustn't faint. But Field—"under rather peculiar circumstances . . . struggling with a patient" . . . *Had his assailant been a patient?* And if not, what an exquisite way to make off with a doctor!

I played mechanically, absorbed in my own thoughts, which made me shudder. I must have followed the cards fairly well. William made no complaint. Nine strokes were boomed out by the clock in the hall. Then ten. And no motor outside. Should I tell of the money—the piano? And of what I had confided to Doctor Field? Had the money I had given him made him, perhaps, the victim of robbery, and the victim of a murderer?

THE clock in the hall struck eleven.

"Angelica's tired," said my aunt, rising. "I think we should all go up."

I protested, breathless.

"I'm going to give you a sleeping tablet," my aunt insisted. "Don't you think I'd better, Roger? The child's so nervous! . . . The tablets are all right, I know, for occasional use. Young Field leaves them for Percival."

"Th-think it would be a g-good idea," Roger agreed.

William said good night. I saw him mounting the stairs in the old, tired way I had noticed twenty-four hours before. My aunt, after a few words and a warm kiss for me, followed him. I stopped with Roger, to talk with him this night but not to drink with him.

"Th-those t-tablets of m-my mother's are v-very good," said Roger as he drained his glass. "F-Field's all right."

Field—Field—where was Field on this night of no moon, scudding clouds, and the whisper of rain? Where was Field?

"W-we all ought to s-sleep tonight—w-we're tired enough!" said Roger.

Which was true. But—we didn't!

CHAPTER IX

ANOTHER MOONLESS NIGHT

UPSTAIRS, William came to the East Room with the tablets that Doctor Field had given for the quieting of Percival.

"Mother sent these," he announced primly, as he looked over my head—I was in a negligée—"and she hopes that they will quiet you."

I said: "Thank you, William, and if you see your mother before I do, please thank her for me. But—I don't think I'll take anything to quiet me to-night."

"Why not?" he asked. "Especially since my mother thinks it best that you should."

"I'm too nervous," I admitted. "I have the feeling that I want to be fully conscious if anything untoward happens."

William drew a deep sort of gossiping-old-lady breath; then he shut his lips in a straight line, and after that opened them to speak.

"And just what do you think will happen?" he questioned in a way which made each of his words have sharp, cutting edges.

"There might be another suicide," I said. And I said it with the deliberate intention of making him feel something of all the disquiet which was rioting within me. His calmness maddened me!

"Now, really, Angelica," he admonished, as he would have admonished a troublesome and annoying child. "Isn't that a bit too hysterical?"

Then he turned. "Good night," he said, "and sleep well. But, my dear Angelica" (and there was anything but affection in that "my dear Angelica"), "you would have a better night, I know, if you took my mother's sound advice and the little dose she sent to you."

"Wait a minute, William," I said.

He halted, his hand on the knob of my door.

"Tell me more of Doctor Field," I begged, my voice not quite steady.

"Of Doctor Field?" he echoed.

"Yes; of what you saw—to-night—in the ambulance."

"Oh, that! I simply saw him struggling with an unruly patient, that is all. There is nothing to be alarmed about in that, is there?"

"I don't know," I answered doubtfully.

"The driver would give him assistance if any were needed," William pointed out.

But would he, I wondered? Would a driver who was paid by the patient, to help the patient, really give the doctor assistance? And was Doctor Field with a real patient or a masquerading one? And was the masquerade of illness donned for the purpose of robbery or for what other dire reason?

"I want to get in touch with Doctor Field now," I said.

"You can telephone him," William responded. "You know where the telephone is, don't you?"

I did know where the telephone was. It was downstairs; past that door where the body of Blake Chester had lain; past the door of the drawing-room, where Toki dusted the piano; in the darkest hall in the house—a hall that was shut away and so isolated that a voice crying for help would be heard by no one above-stairs.

I heard William say good night, and I answered mechanically. Then I stood undecided as he closed my door after him. After a moment I heard a tap on it. I jumped, of course, but when I opened it, trembling absurdly and sick, I saw only William.

"I came back to say that you can reach Field at the Mercy Hospital,

perhaps, if you can't find him at home. He often stays there late," William said. "You put in a call to Philadelphia. The operator will then call you. It takes only a little time."

I THANKED him. But I thought of the waiting downstairs. I thought weakly: "He was probably diverted from coming for me by his work. Why should I suppose anything to be wrong?" But I knew that this was an evasion caused by my fear of the house and of going to that hall.

And in the kitchen would be Janette, or Toki, or possibly the cook, whom I had not seen and about whom I could only guess.

I hesitated perhaps fifteen minutes. Then I knew I mut go down. I thought of getting Roger to go with me, and I paused, shivering, outside his door. He was sleeping hard. I could tell by a high, thin soprano snore, which often, amusingly and oddly enough, comes from the most portly and masculine of men.

I was a fool, I decided, and a weak one, too. If I had gotten Doctor Field into any trouble, it was my job to get him out of it. I would go down, call him, find out what I could of him, and in the morning report his absence to the police—if he were absent.

I WENT down the stairs slowly. The night light that my aunt had told me was always left burning made the hall a dim but possible place. I felt that something was stirring in the drawing-room. My heart beating so hard that it sickened me, I hurried silently past that door. The next door was that behind which the body of Blake Chester had lain. A moment of sickness, and I was by that.

The kitchen was black. I slipped into the telephone cabinet and closed the door after me. For a moment I cowered there in the ebon obscurity. Then I realized that, like a fool, I had neglected to locate the switch and that I must find my number. Shaking, I opened the door again. I sought for the switch that would light the small hall, but I could not find it. Trembling from being balked and held, I hurried to the dining-room, and there I crossed the room on tip-toe. As I came near the wall by the front hall, I heard whispers in the kitchen or the small hall—I couldn't tell which. I groped my way—blindly but quickly—toward the windows, thanking heaven that I had not found the switch which I had been seeking with such frantic haste! There was a bay window that was heavily curtained and capable of being shut away from the rest of the room. I slipped behind one of these curtains and pulled it around me, and as I did so the dining-room lights went on—turned on from the little hall I had quitted only a second before.

PERCIVAL and Janette entered. I knew them by their voice.

"Do you know just what William said to Field?" I heard Percival ask.

"Only what I told you, darling," Janette answered.

"Do you suppose they did it—in their usual fine style?" Percival questioned next.

"I think we can trust them to do it well," she said.

"Call his house," Percival ordered.

I heard Janette quit the room, heard the door of the telephone cabinet close after her. I waited. I was trembling in every inch of my body. I heard Percival move to and fro, and I remembered how he had boasted to me of his strength, and how I had felt that strength, through pain. Then, at length, and when I thought my trembling must

show through the curtain, Janette came back.

"They say he's gone to South America," she reported.

"And he will never come back," said Percival. "He will never come back."

"It's not likely he will—ever come back," Janette agreed.

There was a silence. Then Percival said: "*She* helped?"

I knew they meant me.

"She inherits it from that mother of hers, who was so great a friend of Blake Chester's," Janette stated. "Hell is too good for her sort, and don't be forgetting it again, my darling! I know it's easy to forget, looking on her. I did for a minute, myself."

"I won't. She seemed so young and innocent and lovely at first, that I couldn't quite believe it," Percival murmured, "and before I knew it I begged that they send her away."

"*She will not get away,*" Janette stated.

"No, not alive," I heard. Then there was a slight noise which I knew to be Percival's eery laughter.

"She uses the Emblem," he murmured next, and more as if to himself than to Janette.

"I heard Roger tell her Blake Chester had left it in a bureau drawer in the East Room," Janette confided, laughing as I hope I shall never hear another soul laugh. "And you should have heard her answer. She was surprised. She had never seen it before!"

"No, of course not," said Percival.

For a moment there was a silence, and I wondered, as my hands grew icy, whether four relentless eyes were turned toward the curtain behind which I hid and which, I knew, must be swaying. Then Percival spoke again, and I set my teeth on my lower lip to stop my gasp of relief.

"The plague started across the sea," he said, "and they made it creep into this house. Anything we can do to her will be too easy for such as she, Janette."

"Yes," she agreed; "the plague started across the sea, and the long shadows — the long, far-reaching shadows, Percy, my own dear."

Again I set my teeth on my lips. What a scream would mean for me, I could imagine, yet I had never so wanted to emit a maniac's scream. I felt as if I were going raving mad!

"William is a fool," Percival sneered.

"He is doing his part," Janette commented with another of her mirthless, ironic laughs.

"Well," said Percival, and in a tired, worn way, "since Field is headed toward—South America, shall we go up to—our pleasant dreams? There is nothing to be done about it."

Janette said: "I wonder where the body is?"

"We'll get it—perhaps," said Percival ghoulishly.

I heard the light snap off. Black, ebon black, once more. I waited. It was good I did, for as I stood there something or somebody who was hiding behind the other curtain—the curtain that I had only chanced not to choose as my hiding-place—this something crept out and away!

I GOT upstairs somehow and into the East Room, which was now a sanctuary. I locked and bolted my door. Then I sank to the edge of my bed, where I sat dripping cold sweat and trembling. "I wonder where the body is," echoed so clearly in me that I almost expected to hear the scratch of a phonograph needle on a disc, or static. William doing his part? What was that? And Field, who would never come back!

As I sat there, I remembered the hour. One, I saw, on the face of the smug little clock which was capable of torturing me so.

Another hour and—that closet door and the blue light again. And what else? At one the night before, the coroner thought, a man had killed himself on the front porch, and with Roger's dagger. That morning I had taken from the piano that my aunt said had not been opened in twenty years an envelope which was from this man's personal stationery. That afternoon I had given that envelope to Doctor Field, who was gone now, and who would never come back.

Ten minutes after one. Fifty minutes more before that cupboard would become animated by—*what?*

I looked at the window where, the night before, I had seen the face. I thanked God that the window was black.

Why did Janette and Percival hate me so? Who had been my companion in hiding, who had crept away without molesting me, although whoever it was must have seen me and could have stayed to torture me?

Half after one. I hated the little clock with the saucy, fast tick. If the moon would only shine! I closed my eyes a second to pray as I had never before prayed—for moonlight!

At five minutes before two I went to the door which led into the hall. I opened it widely and propped it open by a door stop that was so heavy I could hardly lift it. Then, by this door, I waited, glancing outside and into the dimly lit hall and then back at that closet door.

TWO! heard the strokes from below. The blue light began to show in the cupboard. I would go to Roger. I backed into the hall. As I did I saw a white, white hand closing around the edge of the door. I ran to Roger's door, and, as I was beating upon this, I heard a fiendish scream. Another, and silence. Utter, hideous silence!

My aunt came running to the hall.

"What was that?" she cried.

Roger, disheveled from sleep, flung wide his door.

"What was that?" Aunt Agnes repeated.

We heard moans. They seemed to come from above. William, the only half-dressed one among us, opened his door.

"You'll have to go up," said Aunt Agnes.

"Don't leave us," I petitioned. "The ghost is here!"

"Oh, my God!" said my aunt. "My darling child—not you! Not *you*, as Percival!"

"Hush," William adjured sternly.

We were silent, trembling, listening. Toki joined us from the rear of the house.

"Please excuse to speak," he whimpered, "but what noise that? I ask."

"We'll leave Toki with you," said William.

"T-Toki will c-care for you, Angelica," Roger said comfortingly.

I saw a glint in Toki's eyes—the hint of a smile. Then instantly his face was impassive.

"Toki take *very* good care of ladies," he promised—too smoothly, I felt.

"Let's go into your room to wait," Aunt Agnes suggested.

"No!" I wailed. "*No!*"

Again we heard that hideous scream. Then we heard pounding from the end of the passage that led to Percival's rooms.

"Open this door, Percival!" William called loudly. "Open it, or we'll break it down! . . . Janette! Janette! Where are you, Janette?"

My aunt clung to the banister, trembling, as I had trembled while I hid in the dining-room.

"Very peculiar," Toki said. My aunt sank, fainting, to the floor. "Too much for nice old lady," he added. "Carry her to own room to bed, then I go help—maybe see who scream loud screams."

WILLIAM came from the corridor, white and with worried eyes.

"There is nothing wrong there," he said. "Janette and Percival are sleeping. Percival went to sleep early. He had had one of Doctor Field's tablets. But that infernal screaming——"

Roger came down from the third floor, also white.

"D-Don't understand it!" he chattered unsteadily. "I d-don't." Then he added a sharp "Listen!"

We listened, Toki stooping above my still unconscious aunt, Roger and William staring blankly ahead, while through the hard beatings of our own hearts we heard more screaming—more agonized screaming. From above it seemed, above—

"Th-there's n-nothing there!" Roger asserted. But where was Doctor Field, I wondered, whose body Janette and Percival wanted for some reason; whose body they expected to have!

Suddenly the screaming was done. We stood silent and quaking, staring at one another in the ominous silence, and then I heard the bang of the closet door in the East Room.

CHAPTER X

THE SECOND DAY

E DIDN'T sleep that night. My aunt was the victim of such stark terror as I had never before witnessed. "What does it mean?" she kept wailing. "What does it mean?"

About four, when I thought she would soon be the subject for a complete breakdown, I suggested that we get away from the house. I did it by a devious method, urging that we go, for a little time, to the Virginia Hot Springs, which I knew of through my mother, who had gone there as a girl—once, I remembered now, with a clutch at my heart, with a group that had consisted of my grandmother (my mother's mother), my aunt Agnes, and Blake Chester, who had been courting my mother at that time.

But this suggestion of mine was soon pushed aside by my aunt's almost frenzied statement that she loved the house; that she would stay in it until her death; that nothing could take her from it, even for a night.

"You don't understand!" she gasped. "You couldn't understand; but this house has meant everything to me—everything. All my dreams and hopes and life are here!"

"N-now, M-Mother," said Roger soothingly.

"But there's a long life ahead for you in it," I said.

She smiled horribly.

"How do I know—after to-night?" she questioned. "How do any of us—know—anything?"

Roger, who was by her bed, leaned forward to lay his pudgy hand on hers.

"H-have I e-ever l-let anything h-hurt you?" he asked protectingly.

"I don't know what that was," she answered in a wail.

"You don't understand the opening of the cupboard door, either," I pointed out.

"N-no," Roger agreed, "but th-that has n-never hurt any one."

"It is not the dead I fear, but the living!" my aunt whimpered.

Roger sat back in his chair, smiling at her indulgently.

"D-darling," he questioned her,

"h-has any one e-ever h-hurt you? D-do you th-think I'd l-let them?"

And I wondered, even with the acute memories of the night, how she could maintain her unabated terror while such unruffled calm as that of Roger's promised her protection.

"What did it *mean?*" she wailed again. "What did it *mean?*"

"N-now," said Roger.

WILLIAM came in, looking more smug than ever, and gazing rather pityingly upon our upset condition. I studied him. Why was he, alone, calm and collected? He only of all of us who had been turned mad by the screaming? Was he the only one in the house, besides Janette and Percival, who knew why Doctor Field had gone to South America? And why he would never return? Such smug security as his was built upon something that was wrong and wholly dire, I felt. I shrank from him as he neared the window by which I was sitting, and which now was beginning to admit a little of that gray light which prefaces the coming of dawn.

"There is really nothing amiss in the house," he said in his prissy way. "I have been everywhere. Doubtless Percival had a nightmare. Janette, you know, is a sound sleeper. She never stirs, once she has gone to sleep."

"It wasn't—Percival," my aunt whispered.

William raised his brows.

"Then, what else? Who else?" he asked.

"W-well," Roger put in aggressively, "P-Percival happened to be s-sleeping a d-drugged sleep. That's all. I couldn't r-rouse him even b-by shaking him. He'd h-had one of Field's s-sleeping tablets."

"Which Angelica would not take," William said.

They all turned to me inquiringly. I felt that even kind Roger wondered why I had not taken the dose that would have insured for me rest—rest, even that night!

"She said she expected something to happen," William went on. "So perhaps"—he paused to light a cigarette, and as he did he raised his eyebrows—"she will enlighten us."

"It was only that after last night," I faltered, "I felt too nervous to like to think—I would be unaware of everything."

I saw that my aunt was satisfied.

"Don't heckle the child, William," she said, almost sharply. "I won't have that."

"I have no wish to 'heckle' her," William responded. "I am only"—he gave me a long, probing look—"seeking truth."

"Th-there is no reason to be d-disagreeable while you are d-doing it," Roger pointed out, almost angrily, "and to outrage the c-code of h-hospitality at the s-same time!"

I SAT silent, staring down at my hands, clasped so tightly on my knees that the knuckles were whitened. Should I tell them of all I knew? Of Percival, who had not that night slept a drugged sleep? Of what I had heard him and Janette say? Of what I had found in the piano? Of Doctor Field's departure? And of—that closet?

I glanced at William, wondering anew at his calmness. No; I would not tell them yet, I decided. Or, at least, I would not tell them all I knew while William was with my aunt and Roger. I would wait a little longer, and then everything I knew I would pour into their ears, and perhaps together we would find some solution for everything that now baffled and terrified us.

"Toki is the greatest coward I have ever known," William said, as he tossed his cigarette into the small

fireplace. "When I went down to investigate the lower floor, I found him crying in the kitchen; all huddled up in a corner by the stove, trembling and crying great, glistening tears."

I didn't blame Toki!

"Wh-what did you f-find downstairs?" Roger asked.

"Nothing," William answered tersely.

"I have thought all the day," said my aunt, "of that man who came to repair the bells, and of the fact that he was not sent by Tyler as he said he was. I have a curious—er—impression that he may have had some connection with to-night's doings."

But William would not have it so.

"In my opinion," he insisted pompously, "that man came into this house for the purpose of robbery. No doubt he had heard, through some source, that we wanted the bells repaired. No doubt he thought: 'An excellent chance to plunder that house.'"

Was there anything in this theory, I wondered, or was William, connected in some way with this man from the outside, eager to allay our suspicions and our fears? William, who, Janette and Percival had agreed, was doing his part.

"If it only were that!" my aunt murmured unsteadily. "I don't want this child spied upon and tortured as she could be by such spying," she ended loudly, as she looked at me.

"W-we'll take c-care of h-her," Roger said.

"I want to know where Theodore Cassell is, too," my aunt went on.

"I would also be glad to know," William admitted. "But even you, Mother, and even in your present highly wrought and nervous state, could not make any connection between his disappearance and the things that have happened in this house. I wish you would do your utmost to compose yourself."

"W-we're n-not all cold-blooded f-fish," Roger commented. "I d-don't blame m-mother. Those s-screams were h-hair-raising!"

"I intend to go to bed," William announced then, after another raise of eyebrows, "and get what sleep I can from this night."

AT FIVE I went to my room. The light was quite bright, and as I slipped from my negligée and crept into my bed I thanked Heaven for the fact that it was spring. Winter, with its late sunrise and its early sunset, would have made an added torture for me in that house.

I could not sleep, of course. My brain whirled with resolves and questions. And among the former was my decision to do everything in my power to locate Doctor James T. Field. I would have a detective, and the best I could employ, sent to South America if I had to. I would also probe and so spice the interest in "The Strange Disappearance of Theodore Cassell, Purser of the *S. S. Atlantis*," which had been told of in only middle-sized headlines in the papers of the last day. I would—and this decision was the strongest—find out in some way the truth about my mother's relation to Blake Chester, so that I might still the evil, incessantly active lips of that segment of the world who keep their ears to keyholes. And I would find out, as I ferreted out these facts, why Toki dusted the piano; why Janette and Percival had clandestine meetings in the dining-room *after* Percival had been ostensibly drugged; why Janette and Percival thought the worst of tortures were too good for me; and what name was worn by "the plague" or the "long shadows," which had crept

across the sea and into this eery home.

The light was quite bright now. I turned away from the window at which I had been staring, and as I turned I saw my closet door open, and again that white, white hand—this time pushing through the opening the small figure made of the three monkeys.

I GOT up at nine, utterly spent from fear and lack of sleep.

When I reached the main floor I found Toki in the drawing-room, dusting the piano.

Trembling, I crept to the dining-room, and before I settled I made a point of going to the bay window, for even by day, something could hide behind those curtains. But they hung slack and neither anything nor any one was hidden by them. Nor was there any trace of two who had hidden to spy, one of them, at least, unknowingly. I settled at the table, touched the bell, and Toki came—from the kitchen. I gasped with surprise. I had seen him in the drawing-room. I thought he had hardly had time to go around the outside of the house, and, too, the front door must be shut with a slam or it would blow open. I knew the catch in the front door was defective. My aunt had told me so in calling to William to take care in closing it. There was no stair to the cellar in the front of the house, I was certain. How had Toki reached the kitchen? Another question!

I answered his good morning. He vouchsafed the fact that it was going to be a pleasant day.

"Will there be a moon to-night, Toki?" I asked him eagerly.

"Yes, Miss Burke," he answered; "very nice moon to-night."

I drew a deep, relieved breath; and the fact that there would be a moon helped me to eat a good breakfast. But this night would make the third, and I believed in the rule of three.

"Patient make pretty good breakfast," Toki said to me, smiling. "Toki very glad patient make good breakfast. Toki at patient's command. Toki friend of Doctor now."

Did Toki know anything of where Doctor Field was, I wondered, with a leap of heart.

"TOKI——" I began. Then I stopped. I had to. For my aunt, white and shaken, made her way into the dining-room. She sat down wearily, and as Toki pushed her chair beneath her his eyes—over her head—were on mine questioningly. I could give to him no response in look or word, and I had already had too much of waiting. Yet again I must wait!

My aunt sighed.

"Only coffee, Toki," I heard her order in the languid voice of a sick woman. She sank back in her chair, and I saw that this morning she looked as old as her years, or older. She had aged, it seemed to me, twenty years during that night.

"I can't get over it—that scream," she confided to me. "If I only knew what it meant! Percival didn't scream—I *know* that. It wasn't his voice—and, anyway, he slept."

"Yes?" I mentally retorted.

Toki came in with fresh coffee.

"Toki," my aunt questioned, "has the butter man been here this morning?"

"Butter man, he no come," Toki answered.

"I want to see him when he does," my aunt stated. "The butter's been rank," she added to me, "and there's no excuse for that now. It's too early for the cows to eat whatever they do eat that makes the butter so loathsome."

I had noticed that the butter was a little strong.

"I'm worried," she went on, "about Roy, too. He promised to wire me when he reached New York. It was his first trip there—in fact, his first long trip anywhere. And whatever you may say of Roy, he keeps a promise."

She sipped her coffee.

"Have you looked at the morning papers?" she asked me.

I hadn't.

"I'm eager to know whether anything has been heard of young Cassell, too," she admitted. "I want to know whether there have been any clues found that would help toward the finding of him. I like that boy. I always have. He's been kind to me."

Toki brought the paper, and toward the bottom of the page we read an item that nothing as yet had been discovered about "The Strange Disappearance of Theodore Cassell, purser of the *S. S. Atlantis*," and I read aloud to my aunt the fact that there was a theory about his having had an attack of asphasia.

"I can't get it out of my head that William said he *thought* he had seen him here," she stated, "and"—she paused and then she went on in an undertone—"*that William knows something about it.*"

"He might have been mistaken," I offered, as I wondered what part in William's game that report had had, and whether it were a true bit of data or whether it had been manufactured for some reason that William, alone, knew. Too many things were veiled!

"I'm going to telephone Doctor Field," my aunt offered next, after a silence that had been punctuated by her sighs. "I want him to come in to see me as well as you. I have been dreadfully overwrought and I still am, although I'm ashamed of it."

"But, good heavens!" I answered her, with a rather mirthless laugh, "why shouldn't you be? One doesn't hear piercing, agonized screams in the night without being made a *little* nervous by them."

She covered her eyes with her frail hands.

"I'm so worried about Roy," she whispered.

AFTER she finished her breakfast she telephoned to Doctor Field's office. I waited, tense, hoping that Toki would join me. There was hardly time to ring for him, and I felt also that I might arouse my aunt's suspicions by doing so; and I wanted to win no one's suspicions! But Toki did not join me, and when my aunt did I saw by her frown that she brought bad news.

"Gone to South America," she said sharply. "And here yesterday and said nothing—absolutely nothing of it! Don't you consider this hasty leaving of his, without good-bys, a strange thing?"

I nodded. I couldn't have spoken. Janette and Percival were right. All chance for mistake was now past: he had gone somewhere, if not to South America.

"And very cavalier," she continued petulantly. "I'm one of his oldest friends, if not one of the closest, and I was one of the few of his aunt's friends who stuck to her after there was only a faint and unfounded rumor of her trouble. I'll confess I'm rather hurt."

"Did his secretary say to what part of South America he'd gone?" I asked.

"No; only a crisp statement to the effect that he had gone. That was all. I'm annoyed. Is that the way to treat old friends?"

I heard myself say it was odd and

not quite kind. He had with him, wherever he was, the twenty thousand dollars I had found. Or hadn't he it with him now? Was it, instead, with his "patient" and the "driver" of that ambulance? And what, in confiding my troubles as I had, had I done?

"Mad, to run off like that, without so much preparation, even, as taking in his motor from the drive. Toki saw it there this morning, didn't you, Toki?" my aunt ended, turning to him.

"Take constitutional, see motor of Doctor by house," Toki admitted. "Very nice motor. Doctor must have depart in great haste."

"He must indeed!" my aunt agreed grimly.

THE morning passed slowly. My aunt wanted me with her every instant, confessing that she was nervous—a confession that was most unnecessary to make, as she revealed it in every way. I had no chance to speak to Toki, although I now doubted his helping me, or any one's helping me! Despair had gripped me.

William and Roger both came home for luncheon; I suppose because they were both troubled about their mother, who was in as wholly upset a state as I had ever seen.

All through the luncheon Aunt Agnes talked in a strained, excited way of Roy, whose failure to wire her of his safe arrival in New York apparently seemed to her the most ominous event of all that had occurred.

"You know where he was going, don't you, dear?" my aunt asked anxiously of William.

"I recommended a Y. M. C. A. for him," William answered, "feeling it would be best for him there."

"W-would d-drive me to c-crime—any Y. M. C-C. A." Roger said, "b-but if you think R-Roy had the b-bad taste to t-take your advice, l-let me wire. M-Mother's worried over her b-black sheep, you s-see."

William gave Roger Roy's address.

"DID he go to Philadelphia by train?" my aunt questioned.

William said a decided "No!"

"He was in the office," William went on, "bidding the boys good-by, and some one happened in who was motoring to Philadelphia, and he asked whether any one would care to go with him, and Roy accepted."

My aunt had gone ashen pale. I thought she would fall over in her chair. But with a determined effort she held herself upright, and through the exertion of her amazing will she spoke, after her first few words, steadily.

"Do you know this to be true, William?" she questioned.

"Why, certainly," he replied with some asperity. "I saw him start. I had just got back from Philadelphia, where, as you know, I ate luncheon with—*your favorite son;* and I happened in the office to see that everything was all right, and I then saw Roy's start."

"Call me a fussy old lady if you like, William," she said hotly, "but Roy has enemies. When he was about fifteen he got in trouble with the only daughter of a farmer back here in the country. The girl never told, but her father suspected. Twice he has waited for Roy with a horsewhip, and once he caught the boy and beat him, saying he'd force the truth from him. But he didn't get it. The boy has good points. Stoicism is one. Now, if this farmer——"

"Oh, Mother!" said William in a tired, annoyed way.

AFTER luncheon I again sought Toki, but he had gone to mar-

ket. Then I consulted the telephone book. I found "Detective Service" under the classified directory, and as I ran my eyes down the list I saw one name that was familiar to me. I chose that one with the hope that I was choosing well.

Then I went upstairs to my aunt's room, where I found her lying down with a wet cloth across her eyes.

"Sick," she admitted, "from last night. Can't get over it. I hate the unexplained."

I thought of telling her of my going to Philadelphia, and why I was going there. Then I decided I would not tell her why. Any showing of what I had told her, through voice, eyes, or word, might help to hide the truth.

"I'm going in to Philadelphia," I said, "to get some little things I need."

"But, darling, can you get around by yourself?" she questioned anxiously.

I laughed. I had wandered through all the great cities of Europe and many of the small ones ever since I was a child, and consequently I had no fear of that sort!

I explained this, and I went on to say that I thought the diversion would help me. She agreed.

"And you don't mind my leaving you?" I questioned.

At that moment Toki, appearing with a letter on his tray, gave me a sly, smiling glance. I met it frankly and coldly, for it brought out all of my hostility and my old fear of Toki. Perhaps, after all, it was as well that I had not had the opportunity to ask him about Doctor Field. What did Toki's saying that he was now a friend of Doctor Field's mean, anyway? How could I know whether Toki's response would be even distantly related to truth? From the first every action of Toki's had built distrust in me. And perhaps, too, in asking for Doctor Field, I would be giving to Toki the knowledge that one person, at least, doubted the South-American-trip story. And if Toki knew the "patient" and the "driver," and Doctor Field were by some miracle alive, my most casual inquiry might actually hasten his death.

I remembered, with a rise of dizziness that made me ill, what Janette and Percival had said of "the body." I didn't believe that—yet, and I did not even dare to let myself dream of its being a possibility. It mattered too much.

My aunt answered my question about her minding my leaving her, saying, in the muted, weak voice of a headachy woman, that she would be glad to see me back, but that she did feel it wise for me to get out and, if I could, to find a little diversion.

And so I left her.

IN MY room, I found that the monkeys that I had dared not touch and that had been left outside my cupboard door, were gone. I dressed quickly. I slipped into my bag a veil and a soft little crush hat. My coat was reversible. I would disguise myself, I decided, before I went to the detective agency. Nothing was safe in the midst of all that evasion, I felt, but more evasion.

A half-hour later I was waiting at the station for what the ticket clerk called "the three o'clock local."

The next instalment of LONG SHADOWS will be found in the February, 1928, issue of MYSTERY STORIES.

He took a stealthy step which carried him into the room.

His Only Chance

By S. B. FOX

A goodly proportion of crooks who are brought to trial are never convicted—thanks to shrewd criminal lawyers, who find various ways of evading justice. Sometimes, however, crooks and lawyers overreach themselves, as exemplified in Mr. Fox's story.

GEORGE MACDONNELL had not come to Boston with the idea of robbing his uncle, Harrison Putnam, but the thought inevitably came to him. He needed money to continue his flight from the St. Louis police, who wanted him for the killing of Dan Peters, and where was a likelier place to find it? Until two years ago MacDonnell had hoped to inherit a slice of the retired merchant's fortune along with Putnam's son, who was the only other relative. Then that affair with the Scott woman had caused his hasty departure from Boston and

started him on his criminal career.

"If the old miser still lives alone, with only a woman in daytimes to keep house, it will be a cinch," he mused.

For three days and parts of two nights he loitered around that section of the city in which his uncle resided. Observations and discreet inquiries yielded gratifying information. Harrison Putnam, though nearly seventy years old, still stuck to his custom of living alone. His son followed the sea and was seldom home; and at that particular time no one seemed to know where he was. The same housekeeper that MacDonnell remembered came early in the morning and left shortly after six o'clock at night. Putnam, never a gregarious or congenial person, rarely had visitors. A doctor, however, called twice during MacDonnell's reconnoissance.

"He'll need that doc more than ever when I get through with him." MacDonnell thought grimly. "Wonder what's wrong. He was always husky as a steer."

He laid his plans with the criminal's ambition to make it a perfect crime, and when finally he climbed through a rear, second-story window of Putnam's house, about nine o'clock at night, it was with confidence that he would never be detected. Once inside, he fitted a black mask over his face, so that only his pointed jaw and his eyes of cruel gray showed. A closely drawn cap met the mask and effectively concealed his squat forehead and coarse, dirty-brown hair. In case his uncle did see him, MacDonnell didn't want to be recognized. There was nothing distinctive in his physique, for he was of ordinary size.

Cautiously he felt his way across the chamber, which was used as a storeroom, and into the hallway. The yellow, illumined window-shades of the library on the ground floor had shown that to be the only lighted room in the house. There he would find his uncle. He noiselessly made his way to the stairs and down over the thickly carpeted treads. With infinite care he slunk along the lower hall toward the bright shaft of light showing through the library door.

Halting a moment in the manner of a cat about to spring, he felt his heart pounding. It always did at the crucial moment preceding an act of violence, and it always annoyed MacDonnell. To him it indicated a rift in his courage—a fear that in the crisis at hand he would meet disaster. Against this fear he would pit the brutal force of his depravity. His lips would tighten to an implacable pencil-line, his pale-gray eyes contract to flinty points. From between narrow, hunched shoulders his angular head would project like that of a wolf scenting blood.

MACDONNELL gripped his revolver and thrust his head around the edge of the doorway. By a lucky chance, Harrison Putnam was facing the other way. He was sitting in a wide-armed chair at a table where he had apparently been writing. At the moment, however, his arms were relaxed, and he seemed to be deep in thought. It was characteristic of MacDonnell in this mood that his glittering eyes fastened like darts on the small bald spot atop his uncle's head. That would be the place to hit him!

He reversed the weapon, his fingers clutching the barrel like talons. He took a stealthy step—another, which carried him into the room. The faint rustle of his clothes was as a stirring draught from the hall-

way. Three more strides like the progress of a ghost. The revolver butt was lifted. Like lightning it fell . . .

From MacDonnell's bloodless lips a half-strangled chuckle was emitted as he leered at the motionless figure in the chair.

"Well, uncle," he gloated, "I guess you'll lie quiet a few minutes! Long enough for me to scoop up whatever jewelry's upstairs. Then I'll come back and frisk you."

He hurried upstairs, and after pulling down the window-shades, boldly turned on the lights in the rooms and searched them. Only in Harrison Putnam's bed-chamber did he find anything of value. There were several stickpins and cuff-links, a few rings and assorted pieces of men's jewelry.

"This'll bring me a couple o' hundred dollars," estimated MacDonnell as he secreted the loot in his pockets. "That's worth the trouble even if the old boy hasn't any cash on him, although he always did carry a roll."

He switched off the lights and returned to the library to assure himself that his uncle had not yet revived. Then he hastily prowled through the lower floor.

The silverware he left untouched. It was too heavy and bulky. Finally MacDonnell entered a small room where Putnam had amused himself with photographic experiments. He was surprised to find that it was now outfitted as a bedroom and apparently was in active use.

A distinct disquietude impinged on the thief's confidence. Who could be using this room? A nurse, perhaps, as Putnam had been ill. Discovery, then, was possible at any minute. MacDonnell nervously retraced his steps to the library.

APPROACHING the still body in the chair from behind, he leaned over it and was about to plunge his hand into his victim's pockets when the unfinished letter on the table caught his eye. Caught it because written in its lines was his own name, seeming to leap out at him. With a surprised gasp he picked up the letter and read it:

DEAR DR. UPTON:

You will be interested, and I trust pleased, to learn that your conversation with me a few weeks ago made a deep impression. Although not a college man myself, I am interested in higher education, particularly of a technical nature. Your description of the work being done in your college has inspired me to help, and I have drawn up a new will bequeathing you half of my estate. This will amount to practically seventy-five thousand dollars.

The other half may also go to you. I am leaving it to my only relative, a nephew named George MacDonnell. He was a boyhood chum of my son, who died in Africa last month from a tropical fever. I have not heard from young MacDonnell for two years, but because of his former friendship for my boy I want to do something for him. In the event, however, that he does not return to claim his inheritance within a year after my death you will—

The reader laid the paper on the table with an involuntary exclamation of amazement and anger.

"Seventy-five thousand dollars!" he gulped. "Ralph's dead, and the old man's left me half his money. Why the devil didn't I come to see him before—this?" There was no regret for his act, save as it bore on the possibility of his detection and the consequent loss of this fortune.

"If I'm ever caught now—or if he learns I'm wanted in St. Louis—I'll not get a cent!" A sudden unreasoning rage swept over him. "Why didn't the old fool do something for me sooner? Send for me, hunt me up, give me some of his rotten money before he kicks in!

Now, even if I get clear of trouble, I'll have to wait for him to die, and he may live twenty years. This little tap didn't hurt him. I could use that money right now and——"

MacDonnell reached into his pocket, and his fingers crooked around the heavy revolver. . . .

AGAIN that vague, irritating shock of hesitancy, of fear fighting for mastery, quivered through him. . . . Was that the squeak of a door hinge? Silence. MacDonnell licked his lips and yanked out the weapon with a muttered oath. He was an old woman! Always he had to shiver at the wrong time. Seventy-five thousand dollars! With an inarticulate snarl he began to beat the senseless form of Harrison Putnam about the head. . . .

So completely enveloped in his bestial cruelty was he that a cry of horror from the hall failed for an instant to penetrate to his consciousness. Then strong arms gripped him, wrenched away his weapon. He fought like an animal, but he was overpowered. They were three to his one. He was handcuffed, rolled roughly onto the floor, and guarded by a man in chauffeur's uniform, who glared at him with horrified rage in his eyes. MacDonnell saw the doctor whom he had observed during his reconnoitering of the house examine the body of Harrison Putnam and turn from it with despondent face. He heard the policeman's voice talking over a telephone.

A GREASY lawyer, one Felix Jarden, well and favorably known in the underworld, came to the jail in response to MacDonnell's message and agreed without enthusiasm to undertake his defense.

"But I tell you candidly," he warned, "that there is not much hope. Those three eye-witnesses caught you in the act."

"How the devil did they happen in?" mourned MacDonnell.

"Your own fault," explained the lawyer curtly. "You went all over the house turning on lights. The old man had been suffering from heart spells and hadn't been upstairs for a month. His doctor happened by and saw those lights. He knew that Putnam never had visitors, so he got suspicious. He hailed a taxi driver, who rounded up the policeman on the beat——"

The lawyer finished with a shrug and regarded MacDonnell unsympathetically. In the improbability of a sizable fee, he felt no particular interest or solicitude for the criminal.

"You shouldn't have killed him at all," he finally stated sourly.

"But seventy-five thousand dollars! That's what I was to get when he died. I'd do worse than murder for that money."

"Well," said Jarden carelessly, "I might myself, but that isn't the point. Your uncle had heart spells. The doctors had given him less than six months to live. If you'd only waited——"

MacDonnell crouched lower in his chair with a grimace of baffled rage. First he had imperiled the possibility of inheriting that fortune by robbing his uncle; then he had lost his chance entirely by killing him. But still——

"See here," he said slowly, puckering his brow, "that money has already been willed to me. Even if I did bump the old fool off, doesn't the will hold? Who can take the money from me?"

The lawyer looked bored. If it hadn't been for the reputation he was trying to maintain among his

chosen clientele, he would not have undertaken this case.

"I don't know. It's immaterial. Settlement of the estate will not be completed till after the trial, and then——"

"Then I may not need the money," finished MacDonnell bitterly. "Listen to me now, Jarden. They say you're a good lawyer. All right, if you are, maybe you can get me out of this mess. Here's an idea."

In subdued tones he recounted the story of the killing of Dan Peters in St. Louis. He described the actual shooting with careful detail, for the circumstances had been such as to lay the shadow of guilt on Peters equally with MacDonnell. He did not add that this was only a seeming fact, or that he had planned the murder as callously as a man seeks to hook a fish.

"I was almost sorry I'd ducked out, for I might have won the case on a self-defense plea. Here in Boston I haven't a chance. The St. Louis affair came first. If you can arrange it to have me extradited to stand that charge, I may be acquitted. At least, you can tangle things up to make a delay, and in the meantime try to get that money for me. You'll get your share of it," he concluded.

This gave a new slant on the problem, and Felix Jarden considered it.

"We'll give 'em a run for their money," he promised. "I'll send word to St. Louis at once, and we'll start a fight for extradition."

THE people of Massachusetts, through their courts, did not hasten to press the case against MacDonnell in spite of caustic newspaper comment. Lawyer Jarden, working at top speed, was surprised at the lack of opposition.

"St. Louis gets you, my boy!" he cried one day. "I put it over easier than I expected to. Now I'll start on the job of getting that money."

"H'm," repeated MacDonnell. "I'll live to use it, I know. Once in St. Louis, I'll go free, and they'll never get me back to Massachusetts!"

"Don't be too sure of acquittal in St. Louis," cautioned Jarden. "There's a good chance, but it's not an open and shut case."

NOR was it. A new, aggressive district attorney was directing in St. Louis. MacDonnell's appearance on the stand was against him. When the jury filed out he sat with haggard face, and felt the old familiar fear upon him.

Felix Jarden had come to St. Louis for the last days of the trial, and to him MacDonnell turned with a shrug of bravado.

"It looks like that money wouldn't do me any good if I got it," he said. "But I did all I could. Here I had a chance. In Massachusetts there wasn't a single hope."

The lawyer was bilious today.

"You fool," he said, "if you'd kept your mouth closed about this shooting here in Missouri, they might never have caught you—and in Massachusetts you'd be a free man with a fortune!"

MacDonnell swallowed hard.

"How? Why?" he choked.

"Old Putnam," said his lawyer succinctly, "had been dead of a heart attack at least two hours when you hit him. You didn't kill him. Consequently you were breaking into your own house and stealing your own stuff. No wonder the police there were willing to let Missouri have you! They had hardly enough against you to give you thirty days."

The jurymen reappeared and took their seats. The foreman delivered a verdict of guilty.

"We want him alive," said Sir Alfred softly.

Twelve Mysterious Men

By CHARLES SAMUELS

A little thing like being in the hands of the law didn't bother Doctor Ivan Sebastian. He simply sat quietly and awaited developments—which, when they became known, dumfounded his contemporaries and will undoubtedly astound you.

I ALWAYS thought that London would prove Doctor Sebastian's downfall. The English have a way of bagging criminals. But Sebastian, of course, can be considered no ordinary criminal. He was an evil, mysterious creature whose soul would have cast a shadow in Hell. There were, in fact, plenty of officials who thought they had detected the smell of brimstone in his wake.

The English, however, are a logical and unsuperstitious race. At least, that section of the English which reports for duty in Scotland Yard is. And it was Scotland Yard that went after Sebastian, hammer and tongs; that battled him in the dark for seven months; that pursued him up blind alleys without pause, through sorceries and horrors so awesome and breath-taking that the London press itself decided to maintain silence concerning many of his activities.

OF course few criminals are as great as their reputations. But in Sebastian's case one must admit that those who had smelled brimstone in his trail were not entirely victims of imaginative noses. For the man had entered London with

a mission as evil as any attributed by the poets and prophets to the master of the lower regions.

He had come determined to disorganize society, intent upon amusing himself by creating terror in the bosoms of the men and women around him. Neither greed nor vice, as these things are normally known, appeared to have inspired him. His destructiveness issued from a deeper, more malevolent force than had ever before baffled Scotland Yard.

Here was a creature—a man to all appearances—who had descended on society like a scourge; whose sole desire was to wreck the smiling surfaces of life. A perverted genius whose brain burned with an ugly hatred of his fellows, he had slipped into London like a plague, had devoted months, perhaps years, to organizing his army of cut-throats, and finally, with a direction Napoleonic, turned them loose.

Crimes which had caused London to hold its breath had resulted. Public buildings had been bombed, apparently without rhyme or reason. There had occurred scores of fires of unquestionably incendiary origin, assassinations of peers and members of Parliament, wholesale hold-ups which more often than not resulted in murder, the kidnapping of children as they sat in schoolrooms, and a host of other unspeakable outrages.

Not a section of the city had been spared. A few of the criminals had been captured, but always their places had been quickly taken by others. And to the police, fighting their way through mystery after mystery, it had seemed as if an irruption of Hell were in progress.

The trial and conviction of the criminals tracked down had seemingly only augmented this ghastly wave of crime, until Sir Alfred Clifford, the Chief of Scotland Yard, and his associates had begun to realize that there was an actual directing force behind this attack. The captured enemies of society spoke brokenly or hysterically or sullenly of the Master, or spoke not at all, choosing to go to their punishment in silence, as to that of some holy cause.

And then, when even the nerves of the ordinarily imperturbable Sir Alfred Clifford had been worn to a frazzle, when even the most stout-hearted of Londoners feared to go about their business unarmed, when the quest for the devil incarnate who had engineered this series of outrages seemed hopeless—Doctor Sebastian was captured.

ONE morning Sir Alfred found on his desk a letter written in a woman's hand. It said simply:

> Sebastian, the Master, can be found at noon, Thursday, in a cottage at No. 1033, Dover Road.

It was signed "An Enemy of the Master's."

There had been a score of similar missives from various sources, but they had all proved to be false clues. Nevertheless, Sir Alfred thought it wise to follow each one through. Doctor Sebastian was too great a quarry for the police to ignore any possible pointer as to his whereabouts.

Certainly the actual capture of the great criminal was in itself disappointing. Nothing less than a third battle of the Marne had been anticipated. Instead of which, Sir Alfred and a company of ten picked men surrounded the little suburban cottage at the named address. Six of them remained on guard outside

with drawn guns. Sir Alfred led the other four into the house.

They found Sebastian lying on a bed, clothed and insensible. The knowledge of his superhuman strength halted them for a moment. Sebastian had a record of pitched battles which might well have caused twenty men, rather than five, to hesitate. There was also the record of his cunning—a cunning that seemed veritable witchcraft.

NEVERTHELESS, Sir Alfred and his associates approached the bed, leveled their guns at Sebastian's huge figure, and ordered him to surrender. There was no answering movement. Still they did not pounce upon him, for pouncing on Sebastian had been proved a futile and often fatal maneuver in the past.

In a few minutes they had assured themselves that he was drugged. Nevertheless, they took precautions. They slipped handcuffs over his wrists, irons over his ankles. They shackled his knees, and for good measure secured him with coils of rope.

Even as they worked, they kept their weapons ready. There were the police records of Moscow, Berlin, and Vienna to guide them, records which told of a manacled Sebastian slipping mysteriously out of his fetters, seizing one of his captors, holding him before him as a shield, and fighting his way to freedom.

"We want him alive," said Sir Alfred softly, "but if he moves, shoot."

While this obsession for bringing Sebastian in alive reflected credit on the civilized and lawful soul of the Scotland Yard chief, it revealed him, on the other hand, as a man infinitely less practical than his captive. But, unfortunately, civilization and the law are not always practical.

Sebastian did not awake, but even in his sleep he looked the part of the terror-inspiring legend he had become. Tall as he was—six feet, three inches—he seemed as broad again across the shoulders. Though he slumbered, his mouth was twisted in an enigmatical smile, even as it was in his wakefulness. The newspapers said at the time of the trial that Sebastian had the head of a poet and the eyes of a devil. The eyes were closed now, yet one could sense that here was a man against whom it was well to be on your guard. A carefully clipped mustache and goatee added to the Satanic effect of the prisoner.

Under his head the men from Scotland Yard found a note in the same handwriting as that which Sir Alfred had received. It too was brief and read:

> When you awake, my dear friend, you will have another cause to remember
>
> KORA.

"Evidently our informant."

Sir Alfred frowned. "Well, I should have preferred a fight. We'd have ended the creature without further trouble. As it is, the courts won't take long."

THE trial of Sebastian staggered London. The police revealed things that had not been suspected. And, as it was no longer necessary to keep silent, the Press had its innings.

Each day, from that of his arrest until the foggy afternoon when the case was given to the jury, the newspapers devoted several columns to chronicling the various outrages said to have been perpe-

trated by Doctor Sebastian. It was amazing, one might well say incredible, that one mind could direct so vast a criminal organization.

The scene of the trial itself was one to excite the imagination. A cordon of guards stood against the wall of the court-room, eyes centered on the prisoner's box. Another cordon surrounded the court-house. By a special parliamentary ruling, all spectators were barred. A half-dozen newspaper men chosen from the hundreds of correspondents who flocked to the trial were permitted entrance. Sir Hugh Lambert, leathery-faced veteran of a hundred legal battles, was counselor for the accused. He had been perfunctorily appointed by the court when Sebastian declared he had engaged no one to defend him and did not purpose engaging any one. Behind the judge stood a special judicial guard appointed by the government. The three counselors for the crown had also been provided with guards.

WITH benches unoccupied, streets outside cleared, the trial was launched. The proceedings were regarded by all as a mere formality, a ritual to be gone through before conducting Sebastian to the gallows. Nevertheless, it was necessary to keep intact the principle of trial by jury. There were twelve men to be chosen.

Throughout the choosing of the twelve Sebastian, the super-criminal, acted his part perfectly. He remained as one transfixed. His fiery black eyes never wavered, nor did his serene expression change. Because of his calmness, his intensity seemed increased a hundredfold. The immobility of his body as the three days of jury selecting continued seemed to affect the tense nerves of the men who watched him.

A parliamentarian might have objected to the manner in which the jurors were accepted. They were men from different walks of life, who made no secret of their determination upon a single thing—the conviction of this fiend who had for seven months spread terror throughout London.

The counselors for the Crown alone seemed interested in the qualifications of the jurymen, dismissing scores who proved not stern enough for the purpose of hangmen. Finally the defense was given the chance to accept or reject the jurors.

But the defense asked no questions. Each time the panel of four was tendered, Sir Hugh, for the purposes of record, inquired:

"Any objections, Doctor Sebastian?"

And each time the man on trial, speaking out of his strange immobility, replied: "No."

Thus the jury desired by the Crown was sworn in, and the trial proper launched. And through the days when accusation after accusation was made against the defendant from the witness stand, the object of it all remained apparently unaware of anything exciting or even interesting. His strange and unaccountable concentration aroused a fear among those who watched him that he was perfecting some satanic miracle which would scatter his accusers and earn him his freedom.

By special arrangement, Sebastian had been transferred from his prison cell to an improvised chamber in the court-house. He was guarded every moment of his confinement. This made it unnecessary to remove him from the building at the end of each day. Precautions were taken also against any attack or interference with the jurymen. Special

guards accompanied them on their daily trips between the court-house and the hotel rooms to which they had been assigned.

FOR five days the Crown piled up its evidence, producing as its final witness a remarkable-looking woman whom it identified as Sebastian's mistress. This was the Kora who had betrayed him to Sir Alfred, the woman who had drugged Sebastian and left the note under his head.

With her appearance the tension of the six days reached a climax. The cordons of guards stood ready, their disciplined ranks on edge with the mysterious sense of impending events. The newspaper men, counselors, and the court watched closely as the voluptuous-looking woman took her place in the chair, her disheveled and abundant red coiffure forming a vivid spot of color against the gray wall of the chamber.

Sebastian alone remained unchanged. His eyes, however, moved. They raised themselves to the witness as she gave her name.

Then, slowly and imperceptibly, an air of panic crept into the strangely guarded place. The woman leaned forward, turning her head with a wrench from the defendant's eyes, and, instead of replying to the question of the Crown's counselor, began to speak in a quick, rising voice.

"You can't hold him!" she cried. "He's up to something. I don't know what—but I know him. I can't tell you anything. I can only warn you!"

"Of what are you afraid?" the court demanded clearly and slowly.

"Him!" she screamed as in desperation. "I feel it. I can always tell when he's working—and he's working now. Something's happening."

The woman's face went white. A moment later she fainted.

The guards stood motionless. A fear as of evil more ghastly than ghosts seen at night was moving and active in this room, and fixed upon those who watched. But nothing else occurred. Sebastian did not stir. The woman, revived, was led away.

"WE REST our case," pronounced the Crown.

"And we rest ours," Sir Lambert spoke up quickly. "We will introduce no witnesses."

"A half-hour will be given each side for its summing up," the court announced.

The senior of the Crown's counselors spoke quietly and intently for half an hour, monotonously reciting the list of crimes which had been charged to the defendant. When he had concluded, Sir Lambert rose and announced that inasmuch as his client had not taken him into his confidence he had nothing to say.

At this point Sebastian moved for the first time in his six days in court. He rose to his feet, smiled at the jury, and addressed the court.

"I should like to enter my own plea to the jury," he said courteously.

The court nodded.

"You have a half-hour."

I have only one thing to say" —Sebastian again turned to the jury-box—"and that is, gentlemen, that none of these crimes have actually been proved as of my doing. I feel quite certain that the Crown has made out no case against me."

With these words he sat down. Even Sir Lambert gasped. The effrontery of the man's short plea overcame Sir Lambert's forty years of legal poise. The rest of the room stared unbelievingly at the im-

mobile figure of the defendant. The court finally broke the silence. Anger struggled behind the judge's effort at judicial calm as he launched into his instructions to the jury. He found it difficult to keep to the cool, damning paper of instructions he had written.

When he had finished, the jury was bidden to retire to the jury-room and there to arrive at its verdict.

"The court remains in session," the judge announced. "There must be no movement or demonstration."

Sir Hugh was seen to gather his few papers. It was known that he would make a perfunctory appeal and that this would be denied. And it was known, too, that the court would pronounce its sentence at once. Sebastian's term of life had narrowed to a very few days. The Press had for the duration of the trial been priding itself on the swiftness and expediency of British justice.

FIVE minutes after the jury had retired a knock was heard upon the door. The bailiff on guard answered and was informed that a verdict had been arrived at. The door was opened. The twelve men issued forth and took their places in the jury-box. In reply to the perfunctory question, the foreman of the jury arose, unfolded the legal document in his hands, and recited in a firm voice:

"We, the jury, find the defendant, Doctor Ivan Sebastian, not guilty of the crimes charged by the Crown in its indictment."

As the foreman concluded and sat down, a paralysis seemed to fall on the room. The chief counselor for the Crown was first to recover. Jumping up, his face burning with rage, he cried hoarsely:

"I demand a poll of the jury."

The court remained as if stunned.

"A poll of the jury," repeated the counselor. "There must be something wrong."

The court was staring with unbelieving eyes at the twelve men in the box. Sir Hugh, his mouth open, horror and bewilderment fixing his leathery face, glanced quickly at his still immobile client, then stood up and seconded the Crown's appeal.

"We must poll the jury!" he cried.

"The clerk," the court announced slowly, "will take a poll."

There came a scene unprecedented in an English court. As each of the twelve jurors was asked his verdict, he replied unwaveringly: "I believe the defendant not guilty." And as each answer came a sense of nightmare settled over the minds of the counselors and newspapermen, bailiffs and guards. The poll ended. The jury, still on its feet, faced the court.

Then through the confusion which filled the minds of those present sounded abruptly the cool, traditional voice of the English judiciary. It was the judge, fully recovered now, speaking calmly, deliberately.

"Gentlemen of the jury, you have weighed the evidence in this case in all its phases, before arriving at your verdict?"

"We have—yes," the twelve men answered in a broken chorus.

"And to the best of your belief as loyal subjects of the British Crown you are ready to swear you consider the defendant, Doctor Ivan Sebastian, not guilty of the crimes with which he has been charged?"

"We are," they answered.

There was a pause. Then the court spoke again.

"The prisoner is dismissed. Court is adjourned."

This announcement, as fantastic and unreal as the verdict, brought a sudden quiet into the chamber. Like creatures under some powerful enchantment, the guards stood motionless as the man whom they knew for a fiend arose to his feet, bowed ironically to the jury, to the bench, and to the counselors of the Crown, and without a word walked out of the room.

As Sebastian passed into the corridor and the swinging doors closed behind him, Sir Alfred with a sudden oath sprang forward.

"Wait!" he cried wildly.

There was a rush of police into the hall. But the corridor was empty. There remained no trace of Sebastian. The building became alive with bewildered searchers. Cries of "Kill the jury!" filled the halls.

A few hours later the published news of the verdict carried bewilderment and panic to every corner of the city. Impromptu mass-meetings of indignant people demanded some explanation of this unlooked-for miscarriage of justice. How in the name of law and order had Sebastian been allowed to escape scot-free?

THE sequel to the strange trial of Sebastian was not long in revealing itself, and with it came the ghastly explanation of the inexplicable verdict.

The political as well as journalistic cry went up for an investigation of the twelve jurors who had betrayed the commonwealth. And with this cry arose a simultaneous outcry that the twelve had disappeared. They had not returned to their homes. There was no trace of them. They, no less than Sebastian, had vanished.

On the third day of the nation-wide search a gaunt and almost broken man was ushered into the presence of Sir Clifford.

This man identified himself as Charles Pierce, selected by the Crown and defense as a juror to try Doctor Sebastian. Four hours later Sir Clifford's secretary handed a copy of the statement made by Pierce to the press representatives summoned. This statement ran as follows:

My name is Charles Pierce. I am a butcher by trade, and my business is at No. 90 Halcomb Place, where I have also lived with my wife and family for fifteen years.

I was summoned for jury service on May 10, and after being questioned I was accepted as a juror by the Crown and defense in the trial of Ivan Sebastian. I was in the first panel of four accepted. At noon I and the other three who had been accepted were taken, under guard, to the Buckely Hotel, in which we were told we would have our quarters during the trial. We were informed that lunch would be brought to us in the room that had been given us as our parlor.

I had just sat down with the other three men to eat when I noticed my three fellow jurors, who had started eating ahead of me, fall forward. I had just swallowed a spoonful of soup and my throat was burning and my head ringing so that I could barely make out what was happening.

I was conscious that a trap was opening in the ceiling and that men were entering the room. A moment later these men had seized us and taken off our clothes. I was unable to move or make a sound. When I came to again I was lying in a dark place, face downward. My three fellow jurors were beside me, and I quickly saw that they were dead. I heard whispering around me and realized there were other people in the vicinity.

I cannot say that I was fully conscious at any time. All I remember is that now and then my eyes opened and I could look through a hole or a crack into the room below; and there I saw our assailants sitting at the table where we had been and eating our food as if they were us. They had dressed themselves in our clothes, and although I didn't know the three dead men beside me well enough to identify them, they had looked like those living men. And one of those at the table looked like me.

I don't know how long I lay in this place. I would open my eyes now and then, but my body and senses were paralyzed and I couldn't move or make a sound. Once when I opened my eyes there were seven bodies around me and then later there were eleven.

I knew in a dim way what was going on, but not until this morning was I able to move a muscle of my body. This morning I found myself rid of the paralysis, and, though terribly weak from lack of food and water, I started crawling around in the dark. I was almost too weak to make any progress at first. But when I realized what had happened I began to bang on the floor, and some one must have heard me.

This report was augmented by a brief communique from Scotland Yard, which read:

The finding of Charles Pierce in the attic of the Buckely Hotel has solved the mystery of the Sebastian jury. Eleven of the twelve men selected by the prosecution and defense were found nude and dead in the attic.

The twelve men who returned the verdict of not guilty in the trial were assassins and impostors in the employ of Ivan Sebastian, and with or without his aid they carried out the plot of substituting themselves for the jurors by means of murder.

It is obvious that these twelve mysterious men were gifted as mimics, as they deceived the court into believing them the legally chosen members of the jury and deceived as well their guards and attendants.

We are doing our utmost to recover the person of Ivan Sebastian and bring him once more before the bar of justice.

(Signed) SIR ALFRED CLIFFORD,
Chief, Scotland Yard.

THE scandal of the Sebastian trial is still agitating English officialdom. Sebastian himself, with all his mysterious myrmidons, has vanished. None of the numerous outrages whose authorship he is credited with has been repeated, but the English public still fears a renewal of his activities, and Scotland Yard still has hopes of apprehending the diabolic doctor.

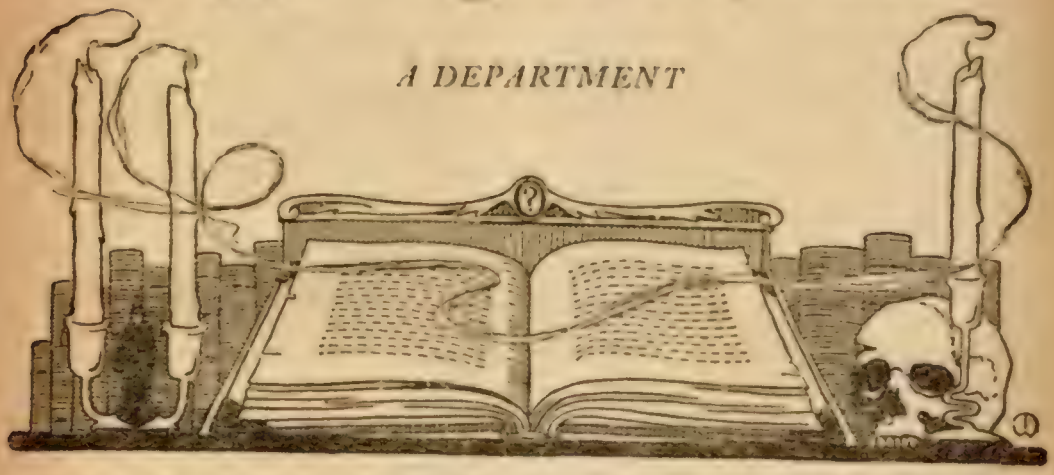
The New Confidence Game of False Arrest

A CLEVER confidence game which has been played in Los Angeles and other cities of the swindler's putting himself in such a suspicious position that he is immediately arrested. He then proves his innocence and sues for false arrest.

One confidence man went to a Los Angeles hotel and stayed there two weeks, paying all his bills promptly by check. Then one Saturday, just after the banks had closed, he went into a jewelry store and purchased a diamond ring, offering to pay for it by check. When the clerks hesitated, he suggested that they call his hotel and find out if his credit there wasn't good. They did so, and, on being assured that it was, gave him the ring. He then went to another jewelry store, a block away, and offered to sell the ring, which was still in its box, for much less than it was worth. The proprietor, becoming suspicious, went to the back of the store and called up the first jeweler. This man, jumping to the conclusion that the check he had received was bad, called a policeman and had the confidence man arrested. He spent Saturday night and Sunday in jail. When the bank opened Monday his check, of course, turned out to be perfectly good. He then threatened to sue the first jeweler for false arrest, and had such incontrovertible evidence that the jeweler was glad to settle with him out of court.

The Most Mysterious Happening of My Life

A DEPARTMENT



Each month MYSTERY STORIES will print letters of five hundred words or less, telling of the strange experiences of our readers.

These experiences need not be of the occult type, but they must have a strong element of mystery, and their truthfulness must be vouched for by the authors.

For each letter published we will send the writer five dollars.

Your story should preferably be typewritten on one side of the paper.

An Actress's Strange Experience

By BEULAH POYNTER

WHETHER this is the most mysterious happening in my life, since there have been many mysterious ones, I am uncertain, but this I do know is the most unexplainable, and I have never tried to find a solution. I am not interested in spiritism; I have no desire to lift the veil—I only know that it occurred.

When I was about fifteen, at the time I left the little town where I had spent my childhood to become an actress, my father purchased some property on the side of a hill, property on which, as far as any of the family was aware, no building had ever stood. He had the grounds terraced, built an attractive two-story frame house, latticed the veranda and planted rambler roses.

There were many windows with southern exposure. The rooms were always flooded with sunshine, and the place exceedingly cheerful in appearance. Yet the first time I stepped across the threshold, after knocking about the States with a traveling theatrical company, I experienced what we term goose-flesh and the sensation of some one following me—a feeling I was never without at night in that place.

My visits were short, and not very frequent, but one season several years after I had become a star, I went there to spend the summer and write a play for the following season. My room was on the second floor, large, airy, and sunshiny, just across a corridor from one occupied by my younger brother. Both rooms had large closets. I always preferred an oil lamp to read by, and usually after retiring read for some hours before going to sleep, a habit I shared in common with my brother.

One night, some time after midnight, I was reading *Madame Bovary*, with no thought of anything but the pages before me, when, on turning a page, I glanced up casually and distinctly saw suspended in mid-air, at the foot of my bed, the outlines of a coffin. I gave a cry that awakened my parents, and I tore down the stairs. This of course may have been an optical illusion, the result of nerves, as I was very overworked at the time; and when they attributed what I had seen to these reasons, I said no more, but afterward slept on the lower floor, near the room they occupied.

Several nights later my brother, then only a little boy, became terrified and insisted that he had seen a shadowy woman come from the corridor into his bed-room and vanish into the closet. This also may have been imagination, since he was an inveterate reader of mystery stories, and was at an impressionable age.

But—two years later, my mother having died in the meantime, I returned home for the holidays accompanied by an Irish maid, Genevieve, to whom I had never spoken of my feelings about the house.

It had been closed since my mother's death. My father and brother lived with my grandmother. But before my arrival it was opened and aired. Genevieve was given my brother's room, and I occupied the one I had always used.

I retired early, tired after the long railroad journey. Genevieve, whom I treated more as a companion than a servant, sat in my room at my desk writing a letter, when a resounding crash, as though some one were striking the table before her, awakened me and made her cry out in dismay.

I quieted her as best I could and sent her to bed. Not ten minutes later she returned to my room, her face ashen, her eyes wide with terror.

"Miss Poynter, some one caught me by the shoulders and tried to pull me out of that bed!" she quavered. "I wouldn't sleep in there for a million dollars!"

Distinctly we heard the boards of the floor in the room adjoining creak as though some one were walking over them; heard the springs of the bed, footsteps on the stairs, but saw absolutely nothing. Neither of us slept much that night, and we kept the lights burning.

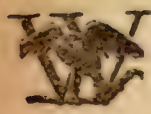
The next morning I related what had occurred to my father. He laughed uproariously, and refused to believe we had heard anything but the branches of the trees hitting

against the window. But one afternoon several days later, as we all sat together in the living room below, I again heard footsteps in the rooms above, and by his quick glance upward I know he heard them also. Nothing was said. There was no explanation.

The property has long since been sold. I have never seen the new owners and do not know if they have experienced anything unusual or not. I have been in places that looked "spooky" and felt nothing, so that I don't quite understand why I should have heard and felt a presence in a new house cheerful in every aspect.

A Soul-Shade

By KATHARINE HILL



WHEN I was eleven years old my mother took me with her to stay with my married sister who was expecting a baby. It was a few nights after the baby come that I woke up from a bad dream and felt very much scared. My mother slept in my sister's room and I was alone, but I was not timid ordinarily.

If I had seen what I saw the minute I woke up, it would be easy to explain it as a figure persisting out of a dream. But I must have lain for five or ten minutes, gradually getting over my fears as I looked around the room—there was some light in it from the door open into the hall—and saw everything as it should be.

I was lying on my back with my knees drawn up, and feeling quite soothed at last I straightened my legs preparatory to turning on my side to go to sleep again. My knees had hidden the foot of the bed and the space above it from me. When I lowered them I saw a white figure standing there and looking at me.

I was terribly frightened—too frightened to cry out. But I had read a good many romantic medieval stories and I remembered how to exorcise a spirit. I made the sign of the cross—we were Presbyterians!—and managed to whisper:

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost—go away!" At this the white shape did not disappear, but moved to the door and went out.

Now, my mother was far too good a nurse to have let my sister wander around the house in her sleep, and if she had come herself to see if I were well-covered up she could not have failed to notice my fright, my strange gesture and whisper. Also, I should have known either of them, as the room was not quite dark, and the woman I saw had some white covering over her head as well as a long, nondescript dress such as no modern woman wears.

My own explanation is that she was a disembodied spirit looking for the new-born child in order to reincarnate herself in it. She may have been too late! Or I may have seen for the first time that night the soul that inhabits the body of my young niece to-day.

The Mystery Club

A DEPARTMENT

If you've ever had a desire to write mystery stories—and there are few of us who haven't—this is the department for you.
Each month Everard Jason, the Mystery Man, presents the synopsis of an original mystery story—but he doesn't give the solution of the mystery involved. That is left up to you.
Here's a chance to try out your ingenuity and your plot-making ability. And if you send in one of the three answers that, in the opinion of the editors, are the best, you'll get as a prize one of the splendid new mystery books listed at the end of this department.
Your answer should preferably be typewritten on one side of the paper.

THAT curious man, Everard Jason, founder of the Mystery Club, came into our office one day recently and favored us with a scowl.

"A friend of mine—you know the kind—has said my problems can be solved merely by a lucky stroke of wit," he complained. "That is a lie verging upon slander, libel, and extemporaneous treason."

"Well, well—indeed!" we observed pertinently. "How so?"

"No matter," he retorted. "Here is a problem requiring new members to use imagination, intelligence, and all their good common sense. I call it the Problem of Impersonation, raised to the eighth power. You know mathematics?" he demanded.

"Oh, yes—distantly," we agreed.

"Then I may as well give you both problem and answer," he said with rude directness. "It will save time."

And here is the problem he handed over:

PROBLEM NUMBER FOUR

THE CLEVER RUSE OF A SECRET AGENT

During the French Revolution it was important that the British Prime Minister send a trusted secret agent to Paris, to

communicate with royalists and aristocrats in hiding there. It was the time of the Reign of Terror, so that any such mission was hazardous.

The secret agent despatched to France was provided with an elaborate set of false identification papers, beyond which he would have to depend entirely on his own cleverness. Fortunately, he was a resourceful spy.

On the road from Calais to Paris, riding his horse alone, this British agent heard sounds of a fight—a shot. He spurred on to the scene of the conflict, where he saw three ruffians overpowering a lone traveler. He fired his pistol, and the three footpads fled. He dismounted, but the lone traveler died in his arms without recovering consciousness.

Examining the dead man's saddle-bags to learn who he might be, the secret agent discovered that he had been a trusted and well-connected representative of the Committee of Public Safety, then governing Paris and virtually all of France. The agent from London seized this opportunity. He disguised himself at once to resemble the dead man, so that he might impersonate him upon arriving in the French capital.

From his papers he learned that this man had been in Holland, Denmark, and Sweden for some time. He was at last returning to report in person. The British agent took the dead man's identification papers, and left his own upon the person of the deceased, to be found by the authorities of the neighborhood. Then he set out boldly to Paris.

He realized that there must be many things about the life, career, and character of the dead man which he could not know. And such items might trip him. Persons he had known well would be greeting him, and he would not know how to respond. Physically, he felt safe in his shrewd disguise; mentally, he recognized dangerous gaps in his knowledge of the man he pretended to be.

However, in view of his experience on the road to Paris, he contrived a ruse by which he might go through with his dangerous impersonation, avoiding the pitfalls of his ignorance and gradually informing himself concerning the person he was supposed to be.

What do you say the ruse was, and how did he manage it?

Everard Jason's answer to this Mystery Problem will be published in the March issue of MYSTERY STORIES. His is an ingenious solution, but we believe it is not the only one possible in solving this interesting problem of resource and intrigue. What do *you* suggest? Don't let this Jason overawe you. He tries it on us, but we resist. He is a clever fellow, but he has no monopoly upon imagination, common sense, or perception of mystery. Give him a battle!

Your solutions should not exceed one hundred and fifty words. They must be received not later than January 5th, 1928. They should be addressed to the Mystery Club, care of MYSTERY STORIES, 55 West Forty-second Street, New York City. No manuscripts can be returned.

The three answers that in the judgment of the editors are the best and most cleverly worked out will be published in the March issue of MYSTERY STORIES. These answers do not need to be similar to that of the Man of Mystery. To each of the writers of these three answers the publishers of this magazine will send a book selected by the winner from the list of new publications given below:

THE OCTOPUS OF PARIS, by Gaston Leroux (*The Macaulay Co.*).
THE WHISPERING CHORUS, by Perley Poore Sheehan (*G. H. Watt*).
THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY, by Herbert Adams (*J. B. Lippincott Co.*).
MYSTERY DE LUXE, by Rufus King (*George H. Doran Co.*).
THE DEVIL OF PEI-LING, by Herbert Asbury (*Macy-Massius*).
VENETIAN KEY, by Allen Upward (*J. B. Lippincott Co.*).
VIVANTI, by Sidney Horler (*George H. Doran Co.*)
THE "CANARY" MURDER CASE, by S. S. Van Dine (*Charles Scribner's Sons*).
SINISTER HOUSE, by Charles G. Booth (*William Morrow & Co., Inc.*).
BEADS OF SILENCE, by Lillian Bamburg (*E. P. Dutton & Co.*).
THE MAN IN THE SAND HILLS, by Anthony Marsden (*A. & C. Boni, Inc.*).
THE TECHNIQUE OF THE MYSTERY STORY, by Carolyn Wells (*The Home Correspondence School*).

AND now let us welcome to the membership of The Mystery Club the new members who so interestingly solved Problem Two—THE MYSTERY OF THE AMBUSH — which appeared in the November issue of MYSTERY STORIES.

The first solution is that which was given by Everard Jason. The three which follow are those considered most suitable by the editors.

SOLUTION by EVERARD JASON

G. the desperate criminal, in ambush and armed with a rifle, sees the alleged squealer he is lying in wait to kill shot by B., who is also a denizen of the underworld and who is supposed to have fled to Canada.

G. knows he will be suspected, as his motive is well understood by the police. He thinks quickly and then he acts.

These are his three moves:

1. With his rifle he shoots B., the slayer of T.

2. He then examines the body of T., finds his unused weapon, takes it and leaves instead the rifle that killed B.

3. Then, before hastening away from the scene of the two crimes, G. moves B.'s body a greater way off, to explain the rifle shot. If B. is shot in the back it is all the better (from G.'s view), as the dying T. will seem to have brought him down as he ran away. G. leaves the scene, certain the authorities will assume that these two gangsters, B. and T., fought a duel and disposed of each other.

THE THREE WINNERS

Solution by Ruth G. Bennett

4213 Terrace St., Oakland, Cal.

Instantly G. decided upon his course.

As a snake might glide swiftly and noiselessly toward its victim, so G. circled around B. to a point behind T.'s body.

B. had dropped on one knee beside the body and was making a hasty search through T.'s pocket. G. had counted upon this. He realized that it would be against every instinct of his kind to leave unsought any possible spoils.

Suddenly G. froze in his track. He had stumbled over a twig. B. sprang to his feet, listening.

G. raised his rifle, aimed carefully.

"Back up," he ordered. "A little more—now to the left!"

B., standing exactly where he had fired the shot that killed T., whined for mercy. The bark of G.'s rifle answered him.

Assuring himself that B. was dead, G. laid his rifle where T. would have dropped it as he fell.

G. quickly left the scene.

Solution by E. Warraitch Simmons

633 Bergen St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Screened by the roadside bush, G. raised his rifle. There came T., the dirty squealer.

"By d' big tree," said G. He gasped. A man had left the tree's shelter and stood awaiting T.

"B.!" marveled G. "Is he putting T. wise? Gad! he's croaked him."

Life in the underworld often demands quick thinking. The gang, [illegible], all knew that G. had sworn to get T.; B. had been in Canada for weeks, forming an alibi. G. stood up with leveled rifle. "Drop d' rod!" he shouted. B. dropped it.

G. sought T.'s automatic and promptly shot B. dead. Wiping the metal, he closed T.'s hand on it. Nonchalantly he started back the way he had come, carefully obliterating all traces of his presence.

"I got a' alibi my own self," he observed: "B. beat me to it."

Solution by Stephen S. Maxson

3875 Reservoir Blvd., Minneapolis, Minn.

(This member sent in three solutions—all good. The editors considered the one given below the most original and interesting of his contributions.)

G. comes out on the roadway behind B. and holds him up. Staying behind B., G. forces him to take the revolver from his pocket and lay it on the ground near T.'s body.

G. then draws an automatic pistol from T.'s pocket and shoots B. through the hand. He wipes his finger prints from the automatic and places it in T.'s grasp.

G. forces B. to leave a trail of blood from T.'s body to a stolen car that G. is driving. With a rope from the tool box of the car, G. compels B. to tie his own feet; then G. ties B.'s hands behind him.

G. drives to the nearest telephone station. There he liberates B. and telephones the police that B. has murdered T.

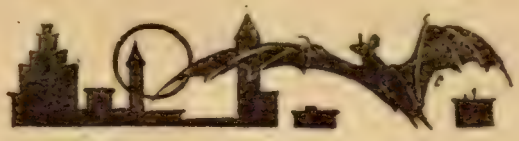
"Seeing that blood, the cops will think you was hurt so bad that you forgot your rod," G. tells B.

We particularly want to mention the unusual and interesting solutions sent in by the following readers, who Everard Jason considers should have, at least, the rank of Detective Sergeant on any first-rate police force:

Charles Denesha, Fulton, N. Y. (The drawings that accompanied this solution were particularly clever).
Dorothy Seneff, Akron, Ohio.
Edward W. Martin, Los Angeles, Cal.
Walter S. Austin, II, Grand Rapids, Mich.
L. M. Yingling, Baltimore, Md.
James Edward Briggs, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Charles A. Scheel, New York, N. Y.
Fred Minter, Clarksburg, W. Va.
B. F. Hay, Washington, D. C.
John Baker, Montreal, Canada.
Joe Stewart, Kelvington, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Because the following also reached satisfactory solutions we welcome them as members of The Mystery Club:

Marguerite E. Andersen, Union City, N. J.; Roy E. Wolfscale, Chicago, Ill.; C. E. Patrick, Winchester, Ill.; Harold Alvers, Wilson, N. Y.; Frank Masgai, De Smet, S. D.; George R. Hall, Bronx, New York, N. Y.; Milton W. Hoffmann, Philadelphia, Pa.; J. K. Manning, Morrisonville, Ill.; Rilla Withe, Portland, Ore.; Edward Stye, Newark, N. J.; Mrs. L. L. Williams, Moosup, Conn.



Strengthening Walls by Burying People Alive in Them

THE belief that the walls of dams, bridges, aqueducts, and buildings are rendered unusually strong by burying a living human being within them still prevails in some countries of Christendom, and there is hardly an old castle in Europe that has not a legend of this sort connected with it. Usually a child is supposed to be selected for this purpose, and roving bands of gypsies are popularly accused of furnishing the infant victims.

When the Siberian railway was being built, great excitement was produced in Pekin by the rumor that the Russian minister had applied to the Empress of China for two thousand children to be buried in the roadbed, under the rails, in order to strengthen it.

Some years ago, in rebuilding a large bridge which had been swept away several times by inundations in the Yarkand, eight children, purchased from poor people at a high price, were immured alive in the foundations. As the new bridge was firmly constructed out of excellent materials, it has so far withstood the force of the strongest floods, a result which the Chinese attribute, not to the solid masonry, but to the propitiation of the river god by an offering of infants. The custom of depositing gold coins or other precious objects in the foundation stones of important public buildings is doubtless a survival of the ancient superstition.

We Tell Our Readers

HERE'S wishing you the Merriest of Christmases and the Happiest of New Years! .May 1928 prove a banner year for you!

We are going to try to add to your enjoyment by making MYSTERY STORIES the best magazine of its kind published—far and away the best.

We feel confident that you'll like this issue. The stories are well written, skilfully plotted, full of action and suspense. The authors know their business.

But we have no intention of constantly exploiting just a few authors in MYSTERY STORIES, even though they are popular. Each story will be judged on its own merits. New writers, and writers who are new to MYSTERY STORIES, will always be welcome.

For the next number—that for February—we have a particularly enticing program, as you will see if you will turn to the announcement on page four.

RIGHT here we want to tell you something about the authors in this issue. Dashiell Hammett, who wrote the novelette, THIS KING BUSINESS—which Fred Craft's attractive cover-picture illustrates—is a tall, slender, good-looking, likable chap, with hair prematurely shot with gray—he's not over thirty-five. He is artistic in his make-up and temperament—quite a romantic figure, in fact. His experience as operative for a big detective agency has given him a wealth of material for use in fiction. We hope to announce another story by Mr. Hammett shortly.

Sophie Wenzel Ellis, whose story, THE LILY GARDEN, is rather startling, is well known down in her part of the country—Arkansas—as a professional advertising woman. But her success in business has in no way dimmed her appreciation of the fine arts.

The author of EVIDENCE IN DEATH says: "My name's Thomas Theodore Flynn, but I wasn't born in Cork. I was born and raised in Indianapolis." Mr. Flynn has worked in shipyards and in steel mills, has been salesman, carpenter, clerk, followed the sea on deck and in the engine-room, worked in railroad shops and as a locomotive inspector, been a partner in a wholesale candy manufacturing business, and a host of other things—a wonderful background for story-writing.

Charles Samuels is a seasoned reporter—which is why his tale of THE TWELVE MYSTERIOUS MEN has the realistic touch. And it is different, isn't it?

Paul Sand teaches science, and likes it. "You have to have your wits about you to keep up with the high school youngsters these days," he insists—just as you have to have your wits about you to turn out a perfect crime, even the too perfect one of THE FATAL FLAW.

S. B. Fox, who wrote HIS ONLY CHANCE, has had a varied career. Before the war he worked throughout the northeastern part of this country as a tree surgeon. During the war he went overseas with a Field Hospital unit and spent a year in hospital work in France. Since then he's worked in a factory, run a filling station, and has finally taken up the breeding of silver foxes.

THE EDITOR.

Our Readers Tell Us

WE SHALL be glad to have readers of MYSTERY STORIES tell us their opinion of the Magazine. We don't want flattery. We want intelligent, detailed criticism and helpful suggestions. We wish each of you would consider himself or herself an honorary assistant editor for the occasion. Of course we can print only a small percentage of the letters received, but for those we print—those which the editors consider the best—we will pay two dollars each. Write *now*.

Here are a few of the letters commenting on our November issue:

DEAR EDITOR:

I have read the new MYSTERY STORIES and found it very fine. It has new life and power, and has, I believe, a bright future ahead of it. It is the only general mystery fiction publication on the market, and this fact, combined with the unusual quality of its stories and general make-up, should secure for it a large following of readers. I believe it to be quite possible to have an interesting mystery story without having a snooping detective pry into each page and hold the wrong clues up for the reader to see. Such stories have become tiresome to the average reader.

Sincerely yours,
JACK SNOW,
308 North Downing Street,
Piqua, Ohio.

DEAR EDITOR:

At first I was the only one in a family of six to read your magazine. Then, because I was so anxious to get the magazine every month, the rest of the family began to wonder what all of the fuss was about when I missed one month's issue.

Then one day Mother had some extra time and was wondering what to do when she picked up the last month's issue.

When I came home from work that evening Mother was very much interested in the magazine and asked me if I were going to get the coming month's number. I told her I was thinking of doing so. She really was interested in the magazine, much to my surprise, as she had before remarked that the stories looked rather dry. And now I am wondering if I shall have to buy more than one copy after this.

The stories are clean and exciting enough for any one to read. They keep your mind busy wondering what will happen next.

The way the authors write the stories almost makes you believe that you are a witness to every scene that they are writing about.

Sincerely yours,
MISS RUTH HENBEST,
838 Templing Street,
Roesburg, Oregon.

DEAR EDITOR:

Since you now invite letters from readers, and since I have been reading MYSTERY STORIES for almost a year, let me tell you how much I find the magazine improved with the current issue.

I particularly prefer series, like FAMOUS UNSOLVED MYSTERIES and THE SPY MASTER. I hope we are going to get a lot more of these. You have always published good stories, so it is the new form and appearance of the magazine which causes my enthusiasm.

The new departments are very attractive. I think I'll try "joining" your new MYSTERY CLUB one of these days, but will wait until I see how other readers are passed by Everard Jason.

Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,
HARRIET M. OTT,
R. F. D. No. 1,
Delaware, New Jersey.

DEAR EDITOR:

Back—back some years in the past I bought a copy of a little magazine entitled MYSTERY MAGAZINE, and it was with pride I watched it grow and become MYSTERY STORIES. It was a magazine after my own heart, along lines I loved to read. Why do I like mystery stories? For the same unexplainable reason that children hide and pretend they are ghosts or monsters of the past or tigers, and jump out and pretend to frighten their playmates. And so it is with tales of mystery: we like to forget and live for a short time in a world of mystery. MYSTERY STORIES is the only magazine of its kind, and THE MYSTERY CLUB, with its mysteries to solve, is, I think, something we all look forward to.

The cover of MYSTERY STORIES is so attractive this month that it alone holds the eye even before one reads the title. I have not had time to look over the contents, as I prefer to read at night to get the best of mystery tales, as the power of darkness adds to their mysteriousness.

Wishing you success and loads of it with your wonderful magazine of the mysterious, I remain a well-wisher at all times, as well as a reader.

Sincerely yours,
GRACE M. NORRIS, M. D.
(First Woman Coroner in New York State),
Utica, N. Y.

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The work of thirty expert Interior Decorators is combined in this big 340 page Modern Priscilla Home Furnishing Book. It is a complete encyclopedia of how to furnish and decorate the home. In its pages are given the simple laws that govern good taste in furnishing, just as grammatical rules underlie correct speech. Chapters on Using Color, How to Make Lamp Shades, Braided Rugs, How to Have Beautiful Floors, Wall Paper, Curtains and Upholstery, Furniture Selections, Lighting Suggestions, etc. Profusely illustrated.

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I'll supply complete selling equipment—and accept your ambition as my "receipt in full"
C E Mandel Pres.

ILLUSTRATED above . . . . The famous Carlton Sample Outfit—the book that is making this entire country a play-ground of Big Money Earning for Carlton Representatives . . . . the records of 1927 certainly prove it!

Between its two covers . . . the nationally known Carlton Custom-Quality Line of Men's Dress, Work and Sport Shirts, Neckwear, Underwear, Pajamas — the easiest to sell Men's Wear Line in America . . . . and again the records of 1927 to prove it!

Year Round Business -Ever Active Market

Through you, we go direct to the vast American market of 35 million responsive prospects—ever new . . never exhaustible! . . . .

All you have to do is show the sample book, quote the low prices and take order after order without effort.

Carlton defrays full transportation charges, collects balances due and guarantees customer satisfaction.

If you prefer, begin by devoting spare time . . . your earnings will soon justify full time to Carlton's big-money-earning proposition.

Carlton actually puts you in business for yourself—gives your ambitions full play, and makes every minute of your association profitable.

Biggest Commissions Bonuses in Addition

You are paid daily — in cash. Each sale carries biggest commissions. Simplicity of plan makes Carlton proposition easy for you to grasp—and easy for you to start right out and show surprising results.

Carlton's Bonus Plan is the most successful earnings booster in the direct selling field—payable regularly and repeatedly, in units from $25.00 to $300.00. Explanation of Bonus Plan as well as details on Carlton's 40% Profit Sharing Plan furnished with outfit.

Profit Sharing is paid to Carlton representatives in addition to all other sources of Carlton incomes.

Complete Outfit FREE

Put it in Your Pocket and Put $100 a Week in with it.

Upon receipt by us of special coupon to the right, you will be promptly furnished with complete sample outfit—the most elaborate selling kit in the field, containing hundreds of beautifully mounted, large sized swatches, of the actual merchandise. Order books, supplies and valuable selling helps included with outfit.

There is no time like "at once" when an opportunity such as this one presents itself to you. Fill in and mail the coupon—your outfit will go forward by return post—prepaid. In less than a week, you will shake hands thankfully with the hand that wrote the coupon.

Start your success at once-Sparetime or full time

carlton MILLS Inc.
114 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK - N.Y.

MAIL COUPON TODAY

C. E. MANDEL, Pres.
Carlton Mills, Inc.
114 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Dept. 334-F

Dear Mr. Mandel:

Send me the Free Carlton Outfit by return mail — prepaid. I am ready to put The Carlton Line and your Big Money Earning guarantee to a test!

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____

LATEST STYLE WATCHES
Direct From Switzerland

LADIES WRIST WATCH SPECIAL MEN'S STRAP WATCH

A 117

$3.99

A 809

A 117. LADIES' WRIST WATCH A rare bargain at $5.99 (actually worth $12.00)! Absolutely Guaranteed. Fully jewelled movement. Engraved case and dial. Platinoid or white gold finish, grosgrain ribbon.

A 809. MEN'S STRAP WATCH. An unusual offer at $3.99! Cannot be duplicated for $12.00. Jewelled movement, radium dial, silvered cushion shaped case, strap.

PRINCE OF WALES Extra Thin Model

$3.99

A 70

A 70. Men's 6-jewel movement pocket watch. White gold finish case. Engraved dial with raised gold letters. Worth every cent of $15.00 and looks as if it cost $30.00. Such a fine-looking thin model watch gives a man an air of prosperity.

AMERICAN SPORTSMAN

$5.99

A100

A 100. Men's strap watch. Platinum finish. In curved case. 6-jewel movement. Radium dial. Genuine leather strap. Sells for $18.00 in retail stores everywhere. A watch any man will be very proud to own, and one that looks as if it cost three times the low price given.

NON-STOP 8 DAY MARVEL

$5.99

A 824

A 824. Wonderful timekeeper. A 6-Jewel Guaranteed movement in silvered case. Silvered dial with artistic designs, visible movement. Runs a week on one winding. Never sold for less than $12.00

GUARANTEED WATCHES

AT LOWEST PRICES IN THE UNITED STATES

Why Are Our Prices Lowest?

BECAUSE We import direct from our Swiss factories in tremendous quantities

Enormous Sales Cut the Costs. We Sell for Cash Only.

No Installments — No High Prices
The First Payment is Your Only Payment

A One-Profit System

is our plan—We have cut out the wholesaler, jobber and retailer. Order to-day and save money.

SEND NO MONEY!

Pay the Postman on delivery our price—plus few cents postage.

Be sure to state the number, name and price of watches when ordering.

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

THE MIDGET BALL WATCH

$14.99

A34

15 JEWEL MOVEMENT CLEAR VISION DIAL

A 34. Decorative flower design, engraved inlaid case. Most effective. This ball watch is new in most localities—very few of them ever having been seen in America—and in addition it is a reliable time-keeper. Worth $25.00 at retail stores.

A 57. Ladies' Sport Watch—14 Karat Rolled Gold, Green or White. Handsomely Carved Case. 6 Jewels. Rectangular Design. Leather Straps in Assorted Colors. Our price $8.99.

The DAZZLING PRINCESS

$9.99

A5

A 5. Rich looking 14 kt. white rolled gold plate case, set with brilliant, French white stones, combined with pretty sapphires. 6-jewel movement. Grosgrain ribbon, worth $25, and you'll be asked that at jewelry stores.

EXQUISITE LA FEMME

$5.99

A90

A 90. Ladies' rectangular, 6-jewel, platinoid finish, engraved case. The lettering on the dial is particularly artistic and the arrangement of the hours is most convenient. Silk grosgrain ribbon. In special display box.

VEST POCKET ALARMER

$3.99

A 823

A 823. Compact alarm clock watch in a silvered case. No bigger than any pocket watch. Jewelled movement. It rings loud and long. Sets on any flat surface when not carried in pocket. Every man and woman can find a thousand uses for this watch. Reminds you of appointments if you set it for the appointed hour.

SPORTSWOMAN DE LUXE

$6.99

A57

"FEDERAL" *U.S. Swiss Agents* — 561 BROADWAY NEW YORK, N.Y. *DEPT. MM*